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Ready for Action?

This issue is all about the verbs – yes, the action words.

We make it easy for you to think of yourself as an adventurer. No, you needn't be an outdoor fitness junkie or liken yourself to a hardcore explorer to be labelled as such. You needn't even define yourself within a yellow border to think about just what it takes to be an adventurer. Oxford defines it as: "A person who enjoys exciting new experiences, especially going to unusual places". Pretty easy – who doesn't love the new and exciting?

So, feel like going wendy and bendy and take on 11 hairpin bends along Troll's Road? You'll be rewarded with the beautiful mountain scenery of Norway's Trollstigen. Or perhaps the notion of being alike a cavalier Lawrence of Arabia will prompt you to camel trek in Jordan's deserts? Or just simply catch some rays in the Caribbean. I'm sure our 20 Easy Adventures (pg 38) will get you to sail, hike, dive, kayak, climb or hunt in some way or other.

In this spirit, we take a closer look at Queensland, including Tropical North Queensland (pg 70), to see how going down under really means going down under – into the fantastic depths of the Great Barrier Reef and into the deep domain of the rainforests in the Wet Tropics. Throw in some jungletop ziplining and spiritual "Dreamtime" walks, and you have the recipe for an authentic full-blown Aussie experience of the most memorable kind. Of course, if the sands seem more inviting, then plan that great escape to Jordan (pg 55). You will get to float on a false sea, explore an ancient city, camp in the desert and eat like a queen in Amman.

The adventure begins now.

Happy travels!

Esther Faith Lew, Senior Group Editor



THIS MONTH'S COVER

Great Barrier Reef, Cairns
PHOTOGRAPH
QUEENSLAND TOURISM

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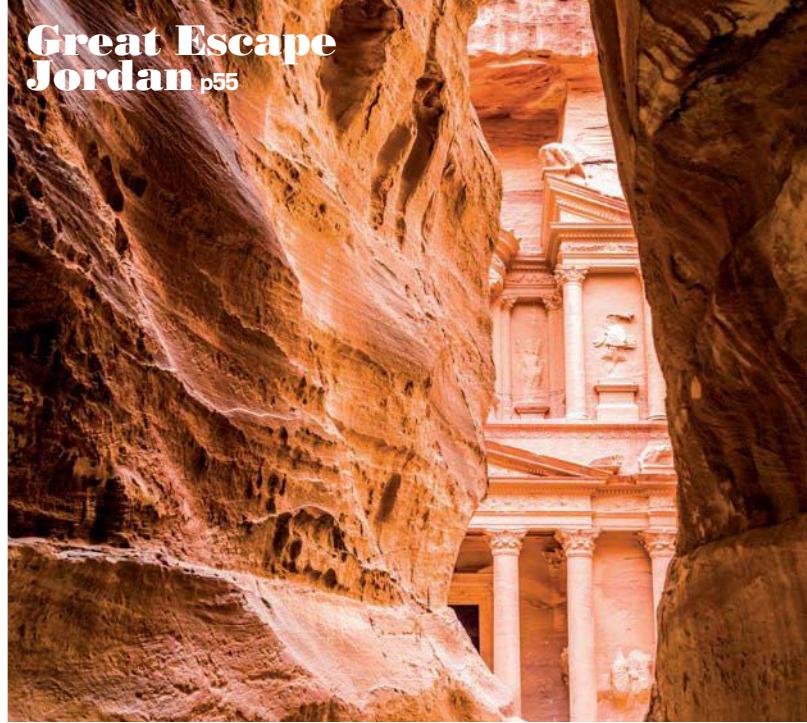
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PHOTOGRAPHS: PGIAW/GETTY IMAGES, TOM MACKIE, SHANGRI-LA'S MACTAN RESORT & SPA, QUEENSLAND TOURISM, FERN BLACKER

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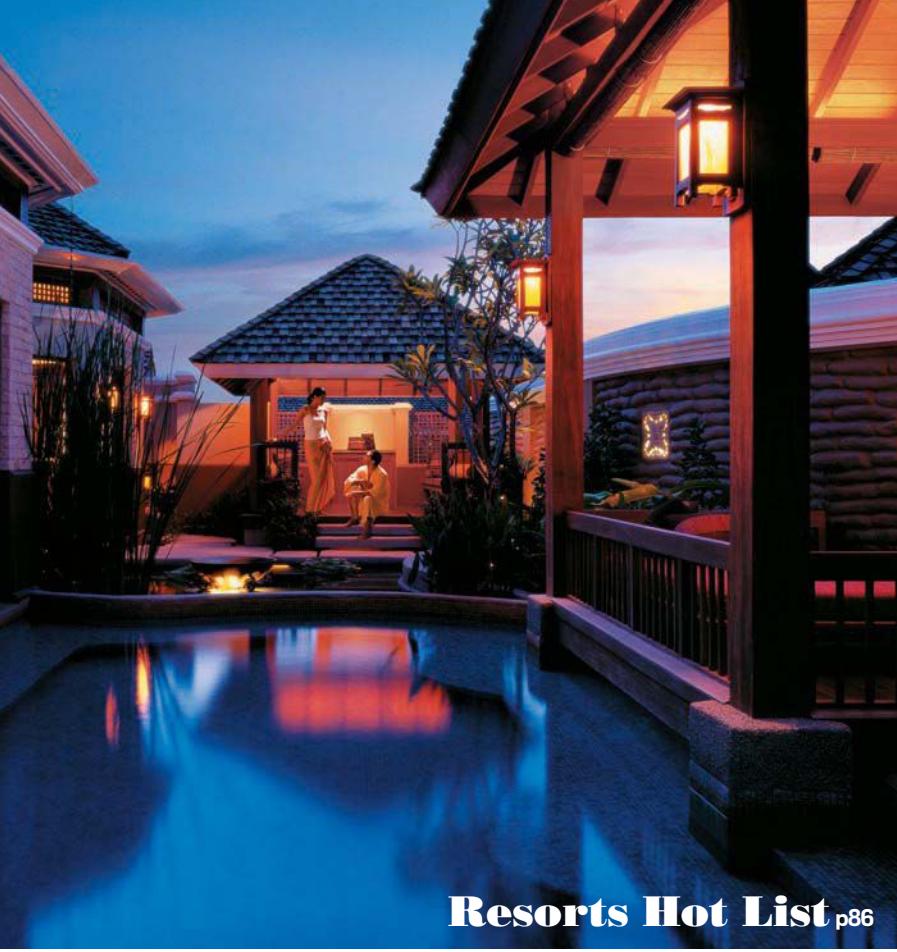
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☛ Drinking

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📘 Books

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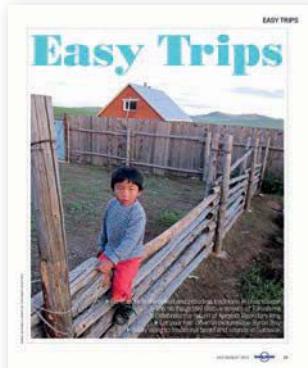
How to make this your magazine

Send us your questions, pics or insider tips and we'll publish the best. Here are some of the ways you can get in touch with us...



Easy Trips

Got any places you'd like to travel to? Our picks are all within a 10 hour radius thereabouts, but if you've recommendations, do email us at asklpmagazine@regentmedia.sg - see page 29



Postcards

Wherever you've been this month, send us your photos* and tell us the stories behind them. Email lpmagazine@regentmedia.sg - see page 8

*WE CAN ONLY PRINT POSTCARDS SUPPLIED IN LANDSCAPE (RATHER THAN PORTRAIT) FORMAT.

Mini Guides

Send us your tips for Chiang Mai, Hong Kong, Sydney, Taipei and Paris to lpmagazine@regentmedia.sg - see page 97



Our promise to you

“ Lonely Planet Magazine provides trusted, independent travel advice and information that has been gathered without fear or favour. We aim to provide you with options that cover a range of budgets and we reveal the positive and negative of all locations we visit.

Because we believe it is important that our journalists experience first-hand what they're writing about and because you require comprehensive information from every corner of the world, at times it may be necessary for us to seek assistance from travel providers such as tourist boards, airlines, hotels, national parks and so forth. However, when receiving such assistance, we ensure our editorial integrity and independence are not compromised through the following measures: by publishing information on all appropriate travel suppliers and not just those who provided us with assistance, and by never promising to offer anything in return, such as positive coverage. **”**

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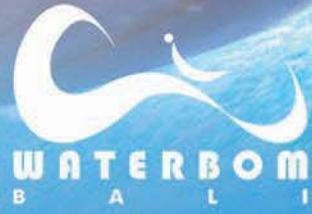
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#FEELTHEFLOW

Postcard

Where you've been and what you've seen

Dubai Marina is an artificial canal district, still in development, built as a residential neighbourhood





Dubai, UAE

High and dry



“ I have been to Dubai a number of times, for work and for holiday. On this particular occasion,

I took the subway to the Dubai Marina, an area I had not visited before. I arrived not long before the sunset and walked along the canals, through the many luxury buildings and restaurants, and then headed to the waterfront to look at the view. The lights of the buildings were starting to sparkle and the Dubai Marina skyline looked stunning against the changing colours of the sky. From where I was standing, I was amazed at how dazzling the views were and extremely happy to have my camera on hand to capture this scene. ”

99

■ **Fern Blacker** lives in East Sussex and spent a day in Dubai for work

Calendar

Mark these dates for some of the best events and shows around the world

JULY 2015



14 to 25 Sept Kumbh Mela

Nashik, India: Originating from a mythical battle between Hindu gods and demons, this spiritual festival is held every three years in one of four cities: Nashik, Ujjain, Haridwar, and Allahabad. Drawing colossal masses of devoted pilgrims from all parts of the world, this year's 55-day celebration will be held in Nashik, one of the major cities in Maharashtra. A key highlight would be the Bathing Day where millions of bathers will wash away their sins and those of their ancestors.

kumbhmelanashik.com



17 to 26 Cheyenne Frontier Days

Wyoming, USA: Since 1897, the Old West has been celebrated each summer at this invigorating festival. It features the world's largest rodeo which reins in professionals who contend for \$1 million worth of cash and prizes. Soak in the atmosphere by watching horse races, bull-riding and parades that exhibit antique carriages and automobiles. A carnival and an air show are also some of the many exciting events lined up. Don't forget to dig into a scrumptious pancake breakfast and savour tasty eats at the old-fashioned chuck wagon cook-off to complete your American West experience.

cfdrodeo.com

17 to 19 Vancouver Folk Music Festival

Vancouver, Canada: One of the oldest and most established festivals of its kind, the Vancouver Folk Music Festival is back this summer for a weekend of exciting and phenomenal performances. This year's festival will feature a mix of familiar and upcoming artists with a broad range of genres and styles. They include Blues legend Taj Mahal, and various other prominent talents from all around the world. Festival-goers will also be spoilt for choice at the wide range of food and art vendors selling delectable treats and unique handicrafts.

thefestival.bc.ca



25 MSIG Singapore Action Asia 50

Singapore: Action Asia Events debuts the first ever trail running race in Singapore in late July. This premier race caters to both experienced runners and newbies, offering 10km, 21km and 50km races. It poses a unique challenge of humidity and heat, a typical trait of urban Singapore, as physical and mental stamina are tested. Like other Action Asia Events runs, this inaugural race will raise funds to improve the quality of life for underprivileged Asians, encourage cultural exchange and build facilities to promote active lifestyles. Slip on your best running shoes and push your limits at this meaningful event.

actionasiaevents.com



17 to 26 Boryeong Mud Festival

Boryeong, South Korea: Indulge your inner child, as the mud festival returns to Daecheon beach for its 18th year, with liberal dunks into the greyish pools of Boryeong's medicinal and mineral rich mud. Get down and dirty with the lineup of activities to participate in, including silt games, cavalry battles, a colourful makeup and cosmetic exhibition, fireworks display, and a screaming Black Eagles jet aerobatic performance.

boryeongmudfestival.com



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Calendar

AUGUST 2015



2 to 7 Aomori Nebuta Matsuri Festival

Aomori, Japan: The waterfront around the Aomori Prefecture Tourist Center and Rassera Land is set abuzz every summer on the nights of the visual spectacle as two dozen humongous, brilliantly lit lantern floats depicting gods and mythical figures are paraded around town with troupes of taiko drummers, musicians and dancers. Join the excitable crowds on the streets of Aomori City and dance alongside the locals in traditional haneto costume.

● www.jnto.go.jp/eng

6 to 19 Sept Singapore International Festival of Arts 2015

Themed "POST-Empires", this exhibition explores what characters become after colonial regimes, dictatorship and communism. Festival Director Ong Keng Sen brings to the public a great variety of shows, such as the Hungarian "Dementia" at the Victoria Concert Hall, and the allegorical performance of "Versus" at the SOTA Drama Theatre.

● sifa.sg/sifa



7 to 9 Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair

Darwin, Australia: First started nine years ago, the Darwin Aboriginal Fair returns to showcase the works of established and upcoming Aboriginal artists in the community. This annual event will feature up to 2,000 indigenous artists' creations from more than 50 Indigenous Art Centres. Visitors will be able to get up close and personal with artists and purchase their one-of-a-kind works of art. Support the Indigenous people of the Top End by participating in this event while appreciating and immersing in their rich culture and heritage.

● darwinaboriginalartfair.com.au

13 to 30 Taranaki International Arts Festival

New Plymouth, NZ: This longstanding arts festival is a biennial affair, featuring both local and international artists and performers. These world-class acts promise to impress and entertain with an exciting line-up, including 24 festival shows, 6 regional touring shows and 7 author talks. The highlight of this year's event would be the Band of Magicians – the world's first magic supergroup. Be in awe and wonder as the four young talents draw you into their thrilling world of magic through skilful illusions and artistry.

● taft.co.nz/artsfest



17 to 23 Kadayawan Festival

Davao, Philippines: This annual festival celebrates the harvest with a smattering of vibrant colours and beats. Going into its 30th year, the festival honours Davao's rich heritage and gives thanks for its bountiful blessings. Hailed as the city's grandest and largest event, this world-renown fiesta showcases lively street dancing by a variety of local tribes, as well as features attractively decorated floats. Immerse yourself into the culturally-rich atmosphere and enjoy festivities including tribal performances, dance competitions and music exhibitions.

● itsmorefuninthephilippines.com

Globetrotter

A WORLD OF TRAVEL NEWS AND DISCOVERIES

My Barcelona

ESTELA PORTOLÉS is a fashion graduate turned entrepreneur who was born in Barcelona and has lived in the city her entire life. Her shop OMG BCN stocks a miscellany of items, from furnishings to jewellery, crockery to t-shirts, exclusively by Barcelona-based designers. 'I only have things in the shop that I would buy myself or have in my home,' says the 29-year-old. She can't imagine living anywhere else, particularly given the cultural explosion the city has seen in recent years. 'A lot of people are doing great things here and that's what I celebrate,' she says. 'This has become such an important city artistically, and it is so beautiful too.'

omgbcn.com

Local Knowledge



'THE MORE I TRAVEL, THE MORE FORTUNATE I REALISE I AM TO HAVE BEEN BORN HERE'

► Barcelona is such a sociable city, and part of that is down to all the cafés and bars. For coffee, I like La Clandestina (1) on Baixada de Viladecols in the Gothic Quarter. It is very laid-back and colourful, and serves great brownies. I also love Caj Chai, which has more than 100 types of tea. It has vintage armchairs and deep sofas. They take their time with everything, so don't go there if you're in a rush! I go there to relax, read and sometimes to write.

❶ terialaclandestina.com; cajchai.com

► One of my favourite bars is 360° Terrace (2) at Barceló Raval. It's on the roof of the hotel but is open to the public and, as the name suggests, has panoramic views of the city. It's like a viewing point mixed with a bar with an information board so you can learn about what you're looking at. You're in this cool neighbourhood, El Raval, and you really feel like you're in the middle of the action and buzz of Barcelona. You can see the sea and the mountains, and the sunsets from there are incredible.

❷ barcelo.com

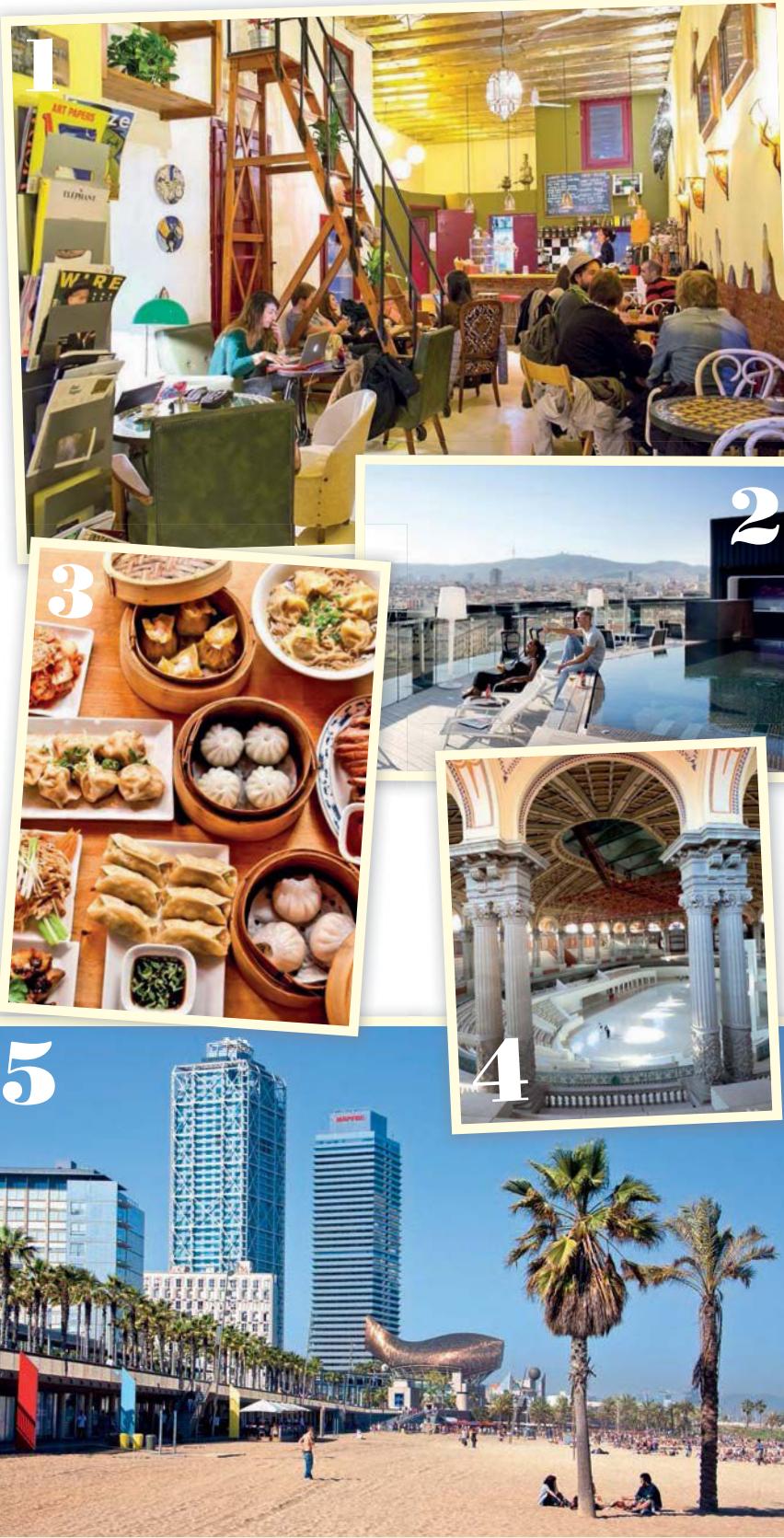
► El Ben Plantat, in La Barceloneta, is a tiny restaurant with only three tables or so and a bar. I go there on Sundays for brunch with fresh juice. My favourite restaurant for dinner is Mosquito (3) in El Born. They have amazing Asian dumplings.

❸ facebook.com/elbenplantat; mosquitotapas.com

► La Virreina is an 18th-century palace off La Rambla that has been converted into an exhibition space. I've been to some brilliant photography exhibitions there. I also like The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (4), or MNAC. This is the national museum of Catalan art and it's in a magnificent building at the foot of Montjuïc mountain, overlooking the Plaça d'Espanya. The ceilings are high and there's something about the way the light streams in that is very beautiful. There's also a terrace with good views of the city, where I go for coffee.

❹ lavirreina.bcn.cat/en; museunacional.cat/en

► On a day off, I walk along the boardwalk at Barceloneta beach (5), feel the sun on my back and look at the sea. It's perhaps not the most spectacular beach in the world, but it's great to have it right by the city. I'll stroll for a bit and then stop for some paella by the seafront.



PHOTOGRAPHS: RAMON SEGUÍ DOMINGO, PERE PENÍ, JUAN JOSE PASCUAL LOBO, IMAGEN M.A.S., JOSE FUSTÉ RAGA/AGE FOTOSTOCK/SUPERSTOCK

Travel Icon

Eiffel Tower

A TRIOMPHE OF ENGINEERING

Described by contemporary critics as 'monstrous', 'useless', 'ridiculous' and a 'hateful column of bolted sheet metal', the Eiffel Tower has since found a place in Parisian hearts, and has so far lasted 106 years beyond its scheduled dismantling date. Built for the 1889 World's Fair, the tower was originally a monumental gateway like its Parisian comrade the Arc de Triomphe, as well as a showpiece for new revolutionary iron-lattice architecture. It was an instant hit, and remains by some measures the world's most visited paid-for tourist attraction – over 250 million have ascended its giddy heights since opening, or four times the population of France today. *Zut alors!*

HIGH HOPES

Like the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Empire State Building and the Burj Khalifa, the Eiffel Tower once claimed the distinction of being the world's tallest structure – only to be overtaken by the Chrysler Building in 1930. However, in 1957 it passed its old adversary in New York after radio masts were added, and is now 324m high.

TOWER OF DANGER

The Eiffel Tower's first floor has long been a magnet to reckless daredevils. In 1912, Franz Reichelt jumped to his death from the platform while attempting to demonstrate a wearable parachute, while in 1926 Léon Collot tried to fly his plane beneath the first floor arch and crashed.

TRI-COLOUR

Believe it or not, the Eiffel Tower is painted in three different shades of brown, with the darkest shade on the top and the lightest on the bottom. The shading is meant to counteract atmospheric haze, and make the structure appear one uniform colour from top to bottom. In previous lives, the tower was once painted bright red and once yellow.

COPYCATS

The Eiffel Tower has spawned many replicas, but the earliest building to take inspiration from the structure was the Blackpool Tower. It was built five years after its French cousin, after the town's mayor demanded something similarly grand beside the Lancashire seaside.

HEART OF GLASS

The tower recently emerged from a major refit to mark its 125th anniversary, the most impressive feature of which is a new glass platform on the first floor. Now, visitors can tiptoe nervously while looking at the giant queues far below.



City at a glance: Seoul

Beyond the amaranthine Hallyu Wave of glitz and glamorous K-Pop and Korean soaps lies a bustling metropolis that values tradition and culture rooted in centuries-old history. Venture forth with us as we show you how modern Seoul still retains its old soul.

If there is one thing Seoul does well, it is preserving its past and having it blend seamlessly among modernity. The blurred lines between old and new stand out especially at Bukchon Hanok Village – a preservation site of traditional Korean homes called hanok – that sits squarely in the middle of the bustling city. The exterior of the hanoks still standing today feature tiled roofs, a central outdoor courtyard, sliding doors and the Ondol (central heating system), prominent points in traditional Korean architecture. However, many hanoks are now

modernised to fit the needs of those still living there.

Modernising traditional Korean architecture is still taking place even today. In 2003, urban renewal called for the uncovering of Cheonggyecheon, a stream that once ran through Seoul during the Joseon Dynasty. Although criticised at that point of time for its high costs in restoration and inconvenience, the 10km stream is now enjoyed by both locals and tourists alike. The walkable trail passes by Insadong Street, Deoksugung Palace, Seoul Plaza and more, with permanent art exhibitions and sculptures flanking the banks. Cheonggyecheon is also



WORDS: RAEWYN KOH



A hanok village set against the modern backdrop of skyscrapers

a popular place for cultural events and a hotspot for pre-wedding photography.

Also gaining popularity for its picturesque backdrop for weddings and fashion photo shoots is Dongdaemun Design Park (DDP), which opened in 2014. The 3-Dimensional amorphous building is the brainchild of Zaha Hadid, an Iraqi-born award-winning architect. The concept of the structure was to push boundaries in architecture and engineering and present a "Metonymic Landscape" that flows like liquid. DDP houses art halls, museums, and a design lab for local designers to showcase and sell collections ranging from graphic prints and homewares to lighting fixtures and even furniture. DDP has also become popular with fashion designers, with events such as the 2014 Style Icon Awards, Korea's Next Top Model Cycle 5 and Seoul Fashion Week being held there.

Korean fashion has definitely seen a leap in demand, thanks to K-Pop idols and drama actors who flawlessly carry fashion-forward garments with ease. Fashion designers in Seoul tend to follow this curve of wearability, with many choosing to style clothing that will look good on a model as well as any

Chic boutiques line the streets of Apgujeong



person on the street. A brand that has already gained a cult following internationally for following this design philosophy is Modern Creation Munich (often stylised as MCM). Formerly a German brand of leather goods, MCM was acquired by Kim Sung-Joo in 2005, where it underwent heavy rebranding and now counts world stars like Kanye West and EXO as fans. Another name to look out for is Steve J and Yoni P, a designer duo whose playful and colourful hip hop-inspired clothes are raved as the hottest things in the Korean fashion scene today and even touted by *Vogue* as "one to watch".

Such brands can be found along



Seoul Fashion Week

the chic streets of Apgujeong, known to many as where high-end fashion designers converge in Seoul. However, it is not the only place where wearable fashion can be found. In fact, Seoul has a multitude of shopping districts that will cater to a variety of personal styles. For example, Myeongdong carries both international and homegrown brands along its street, while Dongdaemun is known as the Mecca of Korean fashion, with the area being filled with wholesale shops that provide merchandise to other fashion retailers in the city. In college towns, Ehwa and Hongdae, fashion is targeted at trendy youngsters and is sold much cheaper than at other places but still carry a high standard of quality.

Visiting Seoul will give travellers a comfortable glimpse of the past with its easy access to historical sites while also providing much-needed cosmopolitan appeal through its tall skyscrapers and advanced technology — think free Wi-Fi everywhere you go. The city is aesthetically-pleasing and will be a hit with amateur and professional photographers alike. Visit Seoul and be amazed at how far this city has come and yet, how much it has continued to remain grounded and true to its roots.



Cheonggyecheon sets the backdrop for social bonding and cultural activities

GLOBETROTTER HOTELS



THE WESTIN CHOSUN SEOUL

Located in the heart of Seoul, The Westin Chosun is within close proximity to government buildings, tourist attractions, the shopping district and is accessible via the comprehensive subway system. The hotel is synonymous with luxury and first-class services, a credo long established in its history that dates back to 1914. It was also one of the first hotels in Korea to introduce western culture to Korea, with its addition of the elevator, ice cream, buffets and dinner parties as part of daily life. The five-star accommodation holds 462 spacious guest rooms that range from one-bedroom suites to an expansive Presidential Suite. All rooms are furnished with the signature Westin Heavenly Bed and also come with

amenities such as an espresso premium coffee machine and LCD TV with interactive services. Hungry travellers will be spoilt for choice with its gourmet restaurants offering French, European, Chinese and Japanese cuisines, as well as the Westin Eat Well Menu for Kids — perfect for families with fussy children. Corporate travellers can enjoy the business centre, where a multifunctional Smart Working Center of workstations and meeting rooms are equipped with the latest technology and soundproof systems.

❶ 106 Sogong-ro, Jung-gu; tel: +822 771 0500; <http://twc.echosunhotel.com/Eseoul.action>



GLAD HOTEL YEOUIDO

GLAD Hotel Yeouido was launched by Design Hotels™ in late 2014. The company saw potential in Yeouido, which they dubbed as Seoul's "Manhattan" district, in building a boutique hotel that mirrored the brownstone buildings that can be found in New York City. Joh & Company laid out locally-sourced bricks into a unique stacking pattern that brought in the warmth of a traditional South Korean home while adding texture to otherwise plain walls. The clever use of park benches in the hallways help make a smooth transition from the outside

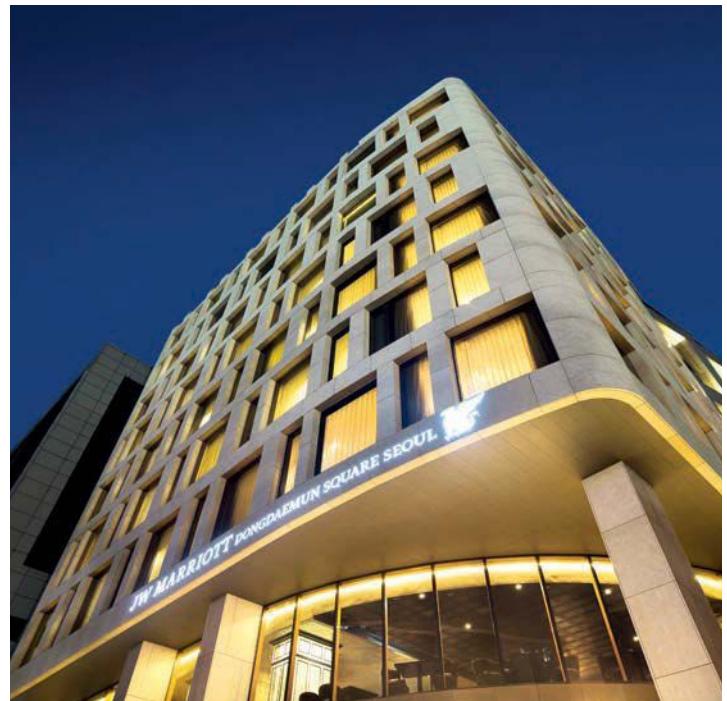
to the interior. The rooms at GLAD Hotel Yeouido feature a clean, minimalist look that combines form with function, such as having practical open shelving for storage and desk space. Over at GREETS restaurant and cafe, diners can expect a playful blend of bricks, bronze and marble, which is often associated with the industrial look. However, the brown tones downplay coldness and instead, give off a cosy and inviting vibe.

❶ 16 Uisadang-daero, Yeongdeungpo-gu; tel: +001 800 3746 8357; <http://designhotels.com>

DOO GUESTHOUSE

A chance to stay at a traditional hanok that provides the comfort of modern amenities and is also easy on any travelling budget can be found at Doo Guesthouse. Located within Bukchon Hanok Village itself, this backpackers' gem is a converted hanok that has its exteriors preserved while its interiors have been retrofitted with air-conditioning, TV, bathrooms and kitchen facilities. Enjoy privacy within your own room or mingle with other like-minded travellers in the courtyard. The courtyard connects to the open living room, where a rack of traditional Korean clothing are available for guests to try on. Friendly staff are more than willing to guide guests in wearing the hanbok, as well as take a keepsake polaroid for a one-of-a-kind souvenir.

❶ 15-6/101-2 Gye-dong, Jongno-gu; tel: +822 3672 1977; <http://dooguesthouse.com>



JW MARRIOTT DONGDAEMUN SQUARE SEOUL

The internationally renowned hotel chain opened Seoul's first LEED Gold certified hotel in Dongdaemun Square early last year. JW Marriott Dongdaemun Square Seoul is located in the heart of Seoul's shopping district in Myeongdong and is also in close proximity to Dongdaemun Design Plaza. The pinnacle of luxury can be experienced at this 170-room hotel with its marble bathrooms and floor-to-ceiling windows that provide a majestic and unobstructed view of Dongdaemun. True to JW Marriott's signature style, requisite facilities for an opulent stay include a health and fitness centre with an indoor lap pool and the JW Spa. Dining options promise to dazzle guests, with international restaurants helmed by award-winning chefs from France, Germany, USA and Korea to tempt discerning taste buds. Complete the evening with a nightcap at The Griffin Bar on the rooftop for a panoramic view of Seoul.

270 Cheonggyecheon-ro, Jongno-gu; tel: +822 2276 3000;
<http://marriott.com/seldp>

PHOTOGRAPHS: JW MARRIOTT DONGDAEMUN SQUARE SEOUL

GLOBETROTTER

ATTRACTI0NS



DMZ TOUR

Separating North and South Korea is the 4km-wide border known as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). So called the scariest place on earth, it is armed 24 hours a day by heavy artillery and specially-trained soldiers on each side. Although there is a possibility of attacks, it has not stopped the DMZ from being one of the most highly-visited attractions in Korea. A DMZ tour will bring tourists through places such as Imjingak Park, The 3rd Infiltration Tunnel, Dorasan Station and even Unification Village. Extend the tour to include Panmunjom at the Joint Security Area, the only place where you will be able to cross the Military Demarcation Line that runs in between North and South Korea. Reservations are required for this exceptionally popular tour, with many selling out within two months.

❶ Tel: +822 739 3501~4; <http://vviptravel.com>

K-POP TOUR

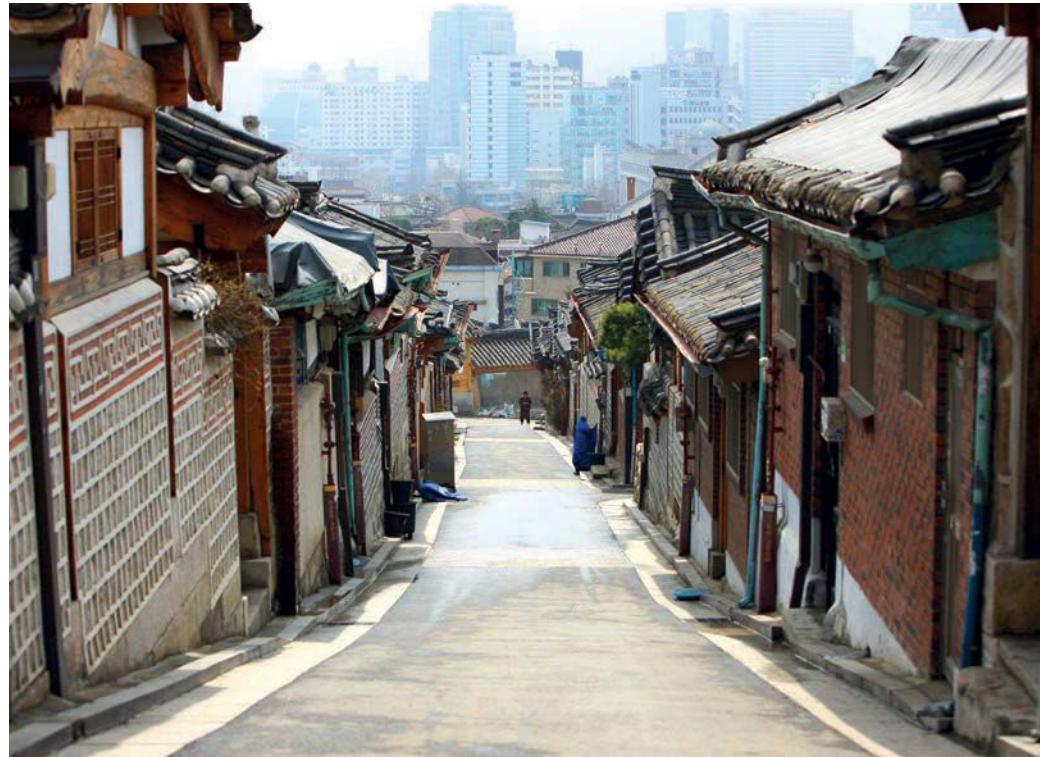
If you have caught the Hallyu bug, a K-Pop tour will be right up your alley. Dream Tour Korea is a literal dream come true for anyone hoping to experience K-Pop beyond the music videos. The seven-day tour includes trips to top K-Pop agencies in Gangnam and even to cafes and restaurants owned by K-Pop world stars. There are even opportunities to attend K-Pop concerts headlined by your favourite stars, including music shows where bands will be promoting their latest hits. The K-Pop craze doesn't end there — join in the fun with a K-Pop dance lesson that will have you grooving in no time. Dream Tour Korea also incorporates Korean culture into the mix, with visits to museums, local markets and shopping areas thrown into the packed itinerary.

❶ <http://dreamtourkorea.com>

DRAGONHILL SPA & RESORT

The porcelain complexions of many South Korean women could be due to the country's fixation on beauty but some claim it lies in the old tradition of going to a *jimjilbang* (Korean spa). Such unblemished skin can be achieved through constant visits to the *jimjilbang*, or so says the many elderly who spend weekends at such bath houses reaping in the benefits of various saunas that utilise organic materials to heal the body. Dragonhill Spa & Resort is one of the largest in Seoul and provides natural respite away from the polluted air of the city. Its eight floors contain a smorgasbord of treatments, ranging from saunas to luxury spas and heated pools. The venue also has restaurants and snack bars for the peckish, and even a cinema hall, a PC room and an arcade for the restless.

❶ 40-712 Hangangno 3-ga, Yongsan-gu; tel: 010 4223 0001; <http://dragonhillspa.co.kr/en>



BUKCHON HANOK VILLAGE

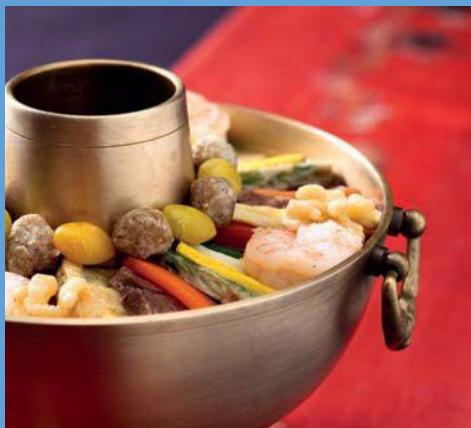
Step back into time and visit living history at Bukchon Hanok Village. The cultural and heritage centre is situated in between Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung palaces and is where many restored hanoks can be found. There are some people who still continue to use hanoks as a place of residency but there are many others who have converted them into workshops, museums, tea houses and guesthouses that can be visited. Walking tours around this scenic maze of streets will bring you through some notable places of interest, such as the Bukchon Traditional Culture Centre, Museum of Korean Buddhist Art, Han Sansgoo Embroidery Workshop and World Jewellery Museum. Bukchon Hanok Village is also within walking distance of Samcheong-dong, a distinctive area marked by its art galleries, speciality cafes and shops.

❶ <http://bukchon.seoul.go.kr/eng>

ROYAL COURT CUISINE

Korean dining tables are often crowded with many little side dishes, otherwise known as banchan, a practice that stems from Korean royal court cuisine. Dine like royalty as you partake in traditional court cuisine at Korea House, who have Han Bok-ryeo, an expert in Joseon Dynasty court cuisine, as a supervisor to chefs. Following the success of the 2003 drama hit, *Jewel in the Palace*, Korea House created Daejanggeum, a table d'hôte that carefully introduces the food presented during the drama. Table settings range in variety with up to 14 dishes being served at one meal and can include Abalone in Soy Sauce, Pomegranate Shaped Puffer Fish Soup and Beef Rib Meat Patties.

❶ 80-2 Pil-dong
2-ga, Jung-gu; tel: +822 2266 9101~3;
<http://kangkoku.or.kr/eng>



TRADITIONAL TEA CEREMONY

Concrete jungles and the fast pace of life we're accustomed to will quickly deteriorate one's mental health. Seek inner peace and relaxation within the confines of tea houses and let the harmonious ritual of tea preparation clear minds and soothe souls. Over at Sin Yetchatjip (Sin Old Tea House), one of the oldest traditional teahouses in Insa-dong, diners will be able to have a sip or two of brewed specialty teas in an eclectic haven filled with unusual ornaments and tropical birds. The calming ambience is great as a stopover in between walking tours of Insa-dong.

❶ 164 Gwanhun-dong, Jongno-gu; tel: +822 732 5257

TEMPLE CUISINE

To align the mind with body and soul, many Koreans consume a detoxifying meal of temple food: specially prepared meals for Buddhist monks and nuns that excludes the use of meat, meat products and even spices. One may be quick to typecast temple food as bland but the holistic construction of just one dish, which begins in the gardens of the temples, brings about an organic, clean taste. Baru in Jongno-gu is one place where travellers can have an exquisite taste of temple food that excels also in its restaurant-quality creativity and presentation.

❶ 71 Gyeonji-dong, Jongno-gu;
tel: +822 2031 2081



STREET FOOD AT GWANGJANG MARKET

Gwangjang Market, opened in 1905, is Korea's first market and has remained in popularity as a local and tourist destination even today. The market has more than 5,000 shops selling fabric, traditional hanboks, and other sundries but one of its biggest draws would be the variety of food sold. One will start to crave the varieties of Korean street food available and anyone familiar with Korean cuisine will very likely find a multitude of stalls selling the same thing. Novices to Korean cuisine, however, may like to try Bindaetteok, a mung bean pancake stuffed with kimchi, spring onions, bean sprouts and more that has been deep-fried into a warm, savoury round.

❶ 88 Changgyeonggung-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul



CHICKEN AND BEER (CHIMAEK)

Dramas in Korea tend to spread food phenomena extremely fast and this classic pairing of fried chicken and beer is just another one to add to the list. *My Love from Another Star*, a tale of an alien living in Seoul for more than 400 years, saw its female protagonist turn to chicken and beer for comfort during cold, lonely winters. The fried chicken in chimaek, a portmanteau of 'chicken' and 'maekju' (meaning beer), isn't your average American-style battered-and-fried wings. Rather, wings, legs and breast meat are coated in a seasoned batter before being fried and then coated once more with a sticky, sweet and spicy sauce. Wash them all down with a frosty tall glass of Korean beer for a treat on any night. Locals will point you in the direction of their favourite chimaek stall but you'll find a consensual agreement that Han Chu Fried Chicken in Gangnam being one of the best among locals and travellers alike.

❶ 549-9
Shinsa-dong,
Gangnam-gu;
tel: +822 3446
5778



GLOBETROTTER OVERNIGHT

FAIRMONT AJMAN

Known for its chain of luxurious hotels and resorts, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts extends its presence in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with the opening of Fairmont Ajman. Occupying a 200m stretch of glistening beach, the hotel features 252 guestrooms and two-storey penthouses, each offering splendid views of the Arabian Gulf. Ajman's maritime and fishing heritage exudes a laid-back charm that allows visitors to slow down and take in their luxurious surroundings. Designed to project a light and airy atmosphere, the hotel rooms highlight a soft palette of pearl silvers and neutral-toned textiles, with ample natural light flowing into the interior. Dining options comprise seven restaurants and lounges, including Spectrum, which offers a sumptuous menu of international cuisines with interactive live cooking stations. One of the highlights is the panoramic view of the Arabian Gulf as diners enjoy their meals outdoors.

fairmont.com



FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG

Newly debuted on the pristine coast of southern Vietnam, Fusion Resort Nha Trang promises a luxurious stay for the spa lover, beach lover and family. Its 72 suites and villas include Family Suites and Double Pool Villas for the entire family to enjoy. The signature Ocean Front Pool Villas provide exclusive direct beach access, a rarity among South East Asia's beach resorts. The rooms are spacious and the courtyard features a large pool and outdoor lounging spaces, making it perfect for entertaining and hosting parties. This lavish getaway also offers a unique all-spa experience, presenting exceptional wellness treatments, namely Chamveda which incorporates locally grown herbs and essences unique to Vietnam. They are created from a fusion of ayurvedic rasayana treatments with naturopath and combine elements of rich Cham culture. A wide selection of dining options are available, from healthy modern cuisine at the beachfront restaurant to light eats and drinks at the Zen Bar and Boat Bar.

fusionresortnhatrang.com

WORDS: JOSMIN ONG
PHOTOGRAPHS: FAIRMONT AJMAN, FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG

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GLOBETROTTER OVERNIGHT



HOLIDAY INN RESORT BALI BENOA

Family-oriented travellers can now look forward to this newly opened resort in Bali. Ideally located on the beachfront of Tanjung Benoa Beach and nestled right next to Nusa Dua, guests can be sure to get some ocean-packed adventure sports right outside their resort rooms.

This new Holiday Inn resort offers 171 rooms and suites, with varying themes and room sizes to cater to family and friends with different budgets. Pick from a selection of family-themed suites or the luxurious Benoa Resort King Room. Designed to provide a sanctuary for families seeking quality time together, the circus-themed Kids Club and the Resort Centre Games Room will provide opportunities of fun. Young children can enjoy a splashing good time within the dedicated kids' swimming pool complete with a waterslide. For guests seeking a rejuvenating break to relieve stress, pamper yourself at the Tea Tree Spa with massages from highly trained masseurs. Children are able to join their parents' treatment with special family spa packages such as 'Mummy and Me' manicures as well as 'My First Massage'.

Well-located in the southern part of Bali Island, the Bali International Ngurah Rai Airport and the city are within minutes from the resort, making it convenient for guests to explore the island.

balibenoa.holidayinnresorts.com



CROWN PROMENADE PERTH

This leading hotel in Western Australia has recently undergone refurbishment, introducing a vibrant new colour palette and contemporary new furnishings.

Located 15 minutes away from the airport and less than five minutes away from the CBD, the hotel is ideal for both business and leisure travellers. Melbourne-based designers, Lombard & Jack, were the visionaries behind the new design, choosing colours that reflect the tones and shades of Western Australia. Open since 2005, this lavish hotel has revamped its 291 guestrooms, exhibiting various artworks of the Swan, the state's symbol. These are complemented by works along the foyer showcasing well-known destinations such as Broome and Rottnest. Each room features sophisticated amenities,

including a deluxe top-of-the-line custom-made bed, promising a comfortable sleeping experience. A tiled feature wall and central skylight have also been added to the lobby, offering a modern and fresh outlook. Corporate travellers will also be able to benefit from the newly opened business facility. This modern accommodation offers guests an affordable and luxurious stay.

crownhotels.com.au/crown-promenade-perth





CENTRE FOR MALAYSIAN CULTURE, HERITAGE, ART & CRAFT

Built in 1888, Central Market started off as a bustling wet market. It has now transformed into charming lanes mimicking traditional shop houses where visitors can enjoy conducive shopping ambience displaying the best of Malaysian culture, heritage, art and craft.

With more than 350 shops and kiosks in a bazaar-like concept, shoppers can relish Malaysian handicraft, batik, souvenirs, antiques and collectables. They can also enjoy craft-making demonstrations, art paintings by local artists, join the dancers during cultural shows and savour traditional cuisine and snacks. As a must-visit destination, there is always something to indulge and experience at Central Market!

Supported by:



Central Market Sdn Bhd (643213-W)

Jalan Hang Kasturi, 50050 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Fax: +603-2032 2399 **Email:** info@centralmarket.com.my

Operating Hours: Monday-Sunday, 10am - 10pm

* Central Market reserves the right to cancel the above activities without prior notice.

CENTRAL MARKET

SINCE 1888

PSHAR SENI

ENTRANCE

GLOBETROTTER

TRAVEL UPDATES

ADDITIONAL FLIGHTS AND STOPOVERS FOR THE JAKARTA-AMSTERDAM ROUTE BY GARUDA INDONESIA

From Jul 22 this year, frequent travellers to Amsterdam can enjoy more flexibility in flight times, as Garuda Indonesia increases frequency of the Jakarta–Amsterdam route to six times a week in order to meet rising market demands.

Adjustments have been made to the Jakarta–Amsterdam–London Gatwick route to accommodate for this. The airline will now fly Jakarta–Singapore–Amsterdam–Jakarta three times a week, in addition to three Jakarta–Amsterdam–London Gatwick flights weekly. Garuda Indonesia aims to develop the travel market from Singapore to Europe with its inclusion of Singapore as a stopover, as it banks in on the heavy passenger movement of Changi International Airport. The change will not bring about negligence to the original Jakarta–Amsterdam–London Gatwick route, however. Handayani, Director Commercial of Garuda Indonesia recognises the importance of serving London and stated that “[the airline] is developing codeshare agreements with various airline partners” and “will continue to enhance [the] London service in the future to meet increasing market demands.”

garudaindonesia.com.sg



FIVE-STAR MUNICH AIRPORT FURTHER ENHANCES PASSENGER COMFORT

Waiting times will fly by for Schengen passengers at Munich Airport, who will now be able to unwind at one more recreation area situated close to gates G 43/44. This recreation area is the third to be built after the increasing popularity of two other recreation areas available at Munich Airport's Terminal 2.

The new space comes with 28 comfortable places to stretch out and 16 business stations with personal power outlets to charge mobile devices. A library of 600 books, courtesy of Weltbild bookshops, has also been included at an exclusive reading area for passengers to freely browse while waiting for flights. To ensure passengers are able to keep tabs on flight statuses, monitors are easily located around the area.

munich-airport.de/en

JOURNEYFUL GOES MOBILE

Singapore-based Journeyful has launched an iOS and Android mobile app. Founded in 2010, this dedicated online travel agency has been offering travellers a choice of over 200,000 hotels worldwide at competitive prices. It features a rewards system where users can earn reward dollars on hotel bookings and through referrals to friends. Users can also submit reviews and pictures, receiving reward dollars when someone votes for the review.

The newly released app allows users to research and book hotels on-the-go, offering convenience and enhanced accessibility. It has a secure and user-friendly platform, promising greater confidence in securing

the best deals with instant confirmation. The app enables filtering by price, rating and location and includes an interactive destination map with hotel listings. Travel consultants and customer service executives are also only a call or email away. Users will receive S\$33 for registering on Journeyful.com and can use it as a rebate for their first hotel booking.

journeyful.com



NEW CATHAY PACIFIC LOUNGE AT BANGKOK SUVARNABHUMI AIRPORT

First and Business Class passengers flying Cathay Pacific Airways out of Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport can now enjoy the new lounge at Level 3 in the Concourse G Departure Hall, which holds up to 140 people.

The feeling of a domestic space instead of a typical airport lounge was emphasised through the use of cherry wood and limestone, as conceptualised by the London-based Studioilse

design team. Passengers will delight in the bespoke chairs and side-tables strategically placed next to windows overlooking the airport runway. Details such as workstations, printers and free Wi-Fi access throughout the lounge have been included to suit the needs of corporate travellers as well. Dining options include The Noodle Bar and The Food Bar. The previous lounge at Concourse D Departure Hall will cease operations with the opening of the new lounge.

cathaypacific.com



In Our Case



1. TIMBERLAND

Made exclusively for women, Timberland and Bee Line for Billionaire Boys Club collaborate for the fourth time to bring fashionistas something new. Style and nature have always been key factors in inspiring Timberland shoemakers, and the newly launched limited edition boots will feature honeycomb and grass patterns as a sign of their commitment to a greener world. These unique boots look trendy and are also made with organic and recycled materials.

Available at Timberland ION Orchard & Raffles City boutiques



3. SONY

The latest in Sony's range of earpieces, the new Smart B-Trainer™ is an innovative training device that comes with built-in memory of 16GB for music, heart rate monitoring, a range of training plans and even real-time voice coaching. Designed specifically for runners, this all-in-one training device comes in a neckband-style housing for comfort and non-slip purposes. Sensors are integrated into this device to accurately measure heart rate, acceleration and GPS, as well as running logs for burned calories, distance, time, speed and more. Pick from five colours: yellow, white, blue, pink or black.

Available at all Sony Stores, Sony Centres and Sony authorised dealers

2. ATOMI

The trend towards healthy living these days has made lifestyle brand Atomi jump onto the organic bandwagon with its Japanese hot teas and dried fruits. High-quality handpicked Green Tea, Houjicha and Sencha from Nara, Japan come in tea bag or loose leaf options. Fancy a snack to pair with your tea? Try the Horiuchi Dried Mixed Fruits or Mikan (mandarin oranges); dried ripe fruits that are free of additives, colouring and preservatives.

Available at Atomi in Mandarin Gallery



6. UNIQLO

This season, Uniqlo has developed two new lightweight clothing items for women. The new Skinny Fit Tapered Jeans (Air) are created to be softer and 20 percent lighter than regular denim. It also stretches by an additional 15 percent to ensure favourable mobility and comfort. Pair jeans with the Ultra Light Weight Stretch Jacket, which weighs in at 330g, is wrinkle-resistant and dries quickly, keeping you dry and cosy at all times. Comfortable, fashionable, affordable and light weight, these apparel are highly recommended for easy packing on trips.

Available in all Uniqlo stores



4. SAMSUNG

A fresh burst of colour has been added to the Samsung Galaxy line – the new S6 4G+ in Blue Topaz. This jewel-toned model combines practicality with the vibrant appeal of a fashion accessory. Equipped with a 5MP front camera and 16MP rear camera, photo qualities are sharp and clear even in low lighting areas. Comes in 32GB and 64GB storage options.

Available at Samsung Experience Stores and authorised retailers



5. CANON

Even if Father's Day has already passed, no gadget-guru dad would pass up on a Canon EOS 760D. Released earlier this year, this DSLR is armed with a 24.2 megapixel CMOS sensor and Canon's latest DIGIC 6 image processor of which users are able to achieve brilliant and vibrant shots. High dynamic range (HDR) shooting is an original feature, allowing photographers to film comfortably in scenes with varying levels of brightness. This is also the first entry-level camera incorporated with a top LCD panel displaying important information such as ISO speed, exposure level and battery life.

Available at all authorised retailers



7. EDOX

Extreme sport junkies can now look forward to owning a modern Edox Hydro-Sub timepiece as the Swiss watchmakers overhaul their original 1965 collection. The new Edox Hydro-Sub series retains its signature 500m water resistance, cushion-case and crown protector Master Lock to protect the inner watch mechanisms from extreme temperature and pressure changes – similar to Christian Redl's North Pole Limited Edition timepiece released last year. Consumers have a wide selection to choose from as the watches are available in both Swiss ETA automatic and Ronda quartz versions, either a polyurethane strap or bracelet and the signature crown protector in slate grey, orange, red or green.

Available at Metro The Centrepoint and authorised retailers

Beauty Buzz

MARC ANTHONY VOLUMIZING COLLAGEN BAMBOO RANGE, FROM \$17.90

Enriched with collagen and tropical bamboo extract, the new Volumizing Collagen Bamboo range by Marc Anthony was created to give users thicker and fuller hair. Collagen, mostly used in skincare and makeup products to plump up the skin, has been included in this hair range to volumise individual strands down to the root, while also improving hair growth and maintaining healthy hair. Additionally, Tropical Bamboo Extract contains silica that prevents breakage in brittle hair.

● Available at Watsons Personal Care Stores



NIVEA SUN WATER SPORT, \$19.90

If you are hitting the beaches this summer, remember to pack your sunscreen to protect your skin. Nivea released Sun Water Sport SPF 50 PA+++ to protect the skin against harsh environmental elements.

Ingredients such as Panthenol help to protect against sea salt and chlorine damage while retaining moisture. It is also water-resistant, making it the perfect choice for active water sports enthusiasts.

● Available at all leading pharmacies



VICTORIA'S SECRET

The latest in its range, the Very Sexy Now Summer fragrance packs a punch with its fruity floral bouquet. Gardenia petals, quince and coconut orchid are the main ingredients in this sweet and alluring scent that comes as an Eau de Parfum (50ml), Fragrance Mist (250ml) or Spray Lotion (200ml).

● Available in Victoria's Secret stores



ESPRIQUE COOL BB SPRAY, \$32

Esprique by Kosé recently launched a BB spray that refreshes the skin immediately and provides good sun protection with SPF50+/PA++++. Pressurised BB liquid is cooled upon contact with the air, making it five degrees cooler to the touch instantly. This multifunctional product is the first of its kind in the beauty industry that incorporates moisturiser, sunscreen, makeup base and powder all in one fuss-free application. This revolutionary spray will be only one you need to keep cool this summer.

● Available in leading departmental stores



LANEIGE MINI PORE RANGE, FROM \$38

Widely known for its use of exclusive "water science" technology, Laneige has now launched a new line with an equally unique Pore Minisizing™ technology that combats clogged pores and strengthens dull and ashen skin. The Mini Pore Waterclay Mask contains mint water, which maintains moisture and deeply moisturises the skin, and pine needle extract to prevent pores from enlarging further. The Mini Pore Blurring

Tightener, on the other hand, helps to seal in nutrients within the skin and cover up pores with Blurring Layering technology, leaving a smooth and bright complexion. Both products come in packages below 100ml, making it the perfect skincare duo to bring on travels.



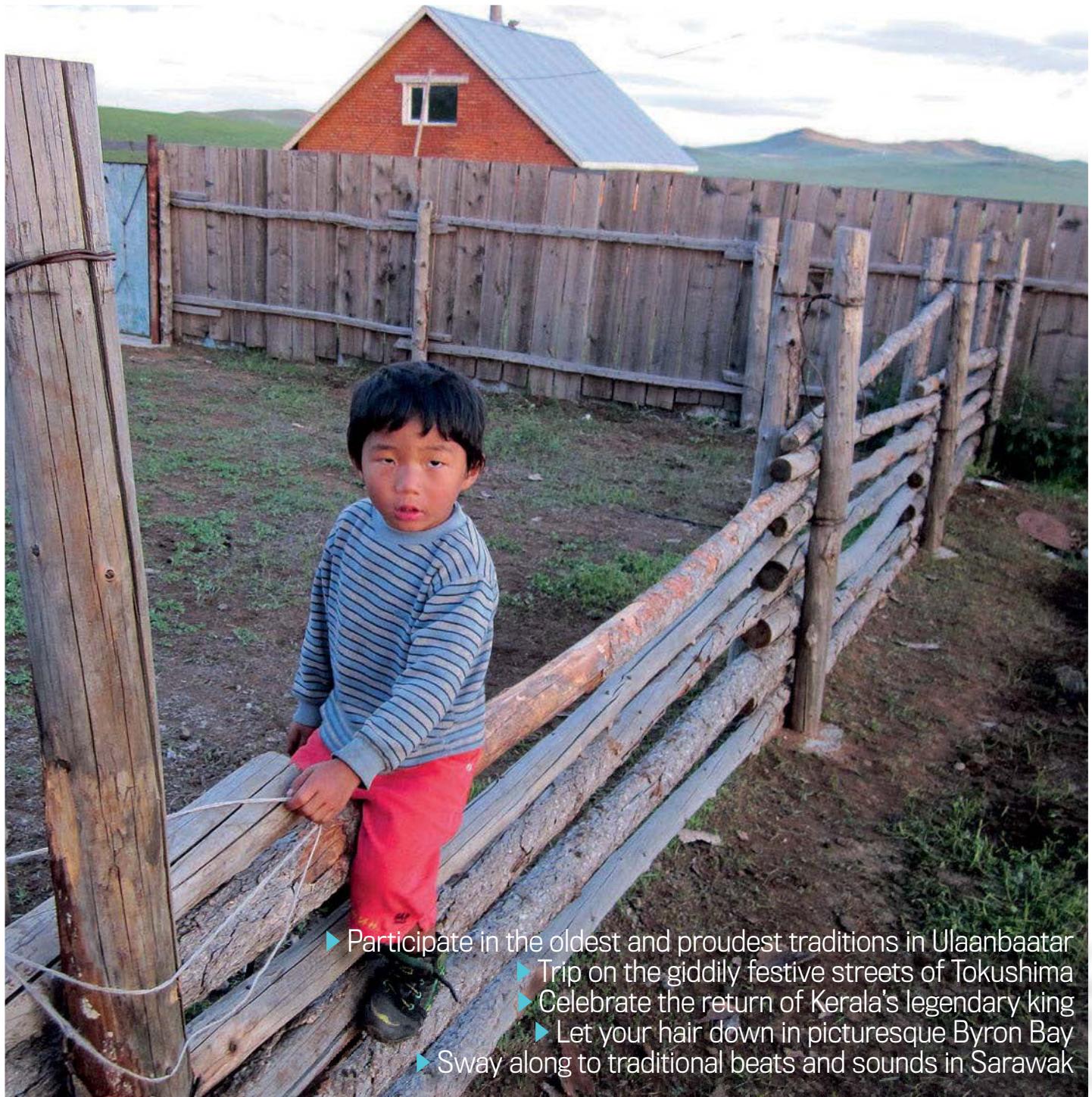
VICTOR&ROLF | FLOWERBOMB LA VIE EN ROSE, \$89

A summery twist to the iconic Flowerbomb edition, La Vie En Rose is a merge of joy, poetry and imagination. Inspired by the shimmering wings of a butterfly, the sparkly scent comes in a sleek pink bottle with a glistening, opalescent finish. A brilliant combination of rose, jasmine, orchids, mandarin and grapefruit brings out the fresh, tangy and floral fragrance of this collection. It is also infused with a surprising hint of green tea that will stir the senses.

● Available at Metro Paragon, TANGS Orchard, Takashimaya and all Sephora outlets



Easy Trips



WORDS: NG PEELING & LINDSAY YAP PHOTOGRAPH: ISTOLETHV

- ▶ Participate in the oldest and proudest traditions in Ulaanbaatar
- ▶ Trip on the giddily festive streets of Tokushima
- ▶ Celebrate the return of Kerala's legendary king
- ▶ Let your hair down in picturesque Byron Bay
- ▶ Sway along to traditional beats and sounds in Sarawak



Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

WHY GO NOW?

The most athletic of Mongols take to the grassy fields of Ulaanbaatar's Naadam Stadium with their best bows and horses in traditional wear, marching alongside monks and soldiers garbed in bright red and blue Chinggis-style warrior uniforms in perfect synchronisation as the band plays mighty military tunes. Naadam has begun.

The annual Naadam, or *Eriin Gurvan Naadam*, is a formal observation of Mongolia's independence from the Republic of China and also celebrates Mongolian culture and tradition in the fierce contest of hundreds in their favourite and most popular

"Three Games of Men". Across the country, cheers erupt around contestants wrestling bare chested in an untimed elimination tournament without weight divisions, eagle-eyed archers firing at targets over 60 metres away – a sport Genghis Khan once conquered half the continent with, and horse racing participated by child jockeys on the small but vehemently strong steeds. The contest was once exclusive to male participation but now allows women to compete in archery and horse racing.

Slow down to the nomads' pace of life and listen to the call of the grassland as you have some warm *suutei tsai*, a

pan-brew mug of tea, milk and salt. Indulge in the gourmet of the plains with jugs of *airag*, alcoholic mare's milk at hand, including the tasty *horhog*, lamb

meat baked and served in pots with vegetables, and the scrumptious *boodog* meat tenderly barbecued from the inside with hot stones.

HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

► The Naadam Festival takes place from 11th to 13th July every year.

► Travel to Ulaanbaatar's Chinggis Khaan International Airport from Singapore with Air China (1 layover) or with Korean Air and Malaysia Airlines from Kuala Lumpur (1 layover).

► To experience the unique nomadic life in Mongolia, consider lodging with a local

herder family in traditional ger tentages in Darkhid Valley 30 minutes from Ulaanbaatar (from US\$40 per night per person; stonehorsemongolia.com), or join a 14-day overland trip on horseback across the Gobi desert, visiting prominent local monasteries and villages, and end with three days of Naadam (from US\$2,211 per person travelling in a group of three; gertoger.org).

Tokushima, Japan

WHY GO NOW?

Known as one of three of Japan's most significant and largest traditional dance festivals and an intangible cultural and historical asset of the Japanese people, the Awa Odori Festival – or Awa Dance Festival – attracts thousands from all around Japan and the world to line the streets of Tokushima.

As the Japanese saying goes: "It's a fool who dances and a fool who watches, so if both are fools, you may as well dance!" Gone is the usual front of reservation; instead it's out with whacky trotting and singing at this yearly "dance of the fool". Troupes of women clothed in colourful, traditional yukata, and wooden geta shoes dance in synchronised steps, while men and children dance in an "inebriated" gait, calling out a ditty in turn down the streets.

The story goes that the feudal lord Hachisuka Iemasa sent sake to the townsfolk to celebrate the completion of the Tokushima Castle, with which they drank, sang, and danced, and have done so ever since. Today, the festival has become a version of the Bon Odori dance meant to welcome ancestral spirits during the Obon festival, or

ghost festival that takes place in the seventh lunar month.

Main celebrations begin at 6pm and end around 10.30pm. Designated seating areas may require the purchase of tickets at convenience stores or the tourist information centre in front of Tokushima Station. Take some time to appreciate the festival, or even learn the dance, at the Awa Odori Kaikan, a museum dedicated to the dance and festival.

HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

⌚ Awa Odori takes place from 12th to 15th August this year.

❶ Travel with Scoot's new direct flight to Osaka Kansai International Airport from Singapore or by AirAsia from Kuala Lumpur. Take a 2.5 hours' highway bus ride from JR Highway or Hankyu Sanbancho bus terminals near Osaka Station to Tokushima Station.

🏨 Hotels within Tokushima are often booked out during the festival period. Try neighbouring cities such as Naruto, Takamatsu or Osaka. The 922-room Hotel New Hankyu Osaka is furnished with modern, simplistic designs, with a choice of 18 splendid dining and drinking options, along with party rooms and chapel, conveniently located next to Osaka Station City and its sizeable list of sumptuous restaurants, cafés and shopping outlets (from US\$236.10, hankyu-hotel.com).



Women dressed in traditional costume dancing in unison

2



Huge crowds witnessing a parade of lavishly embellished elephants

3

Kerala, India

WHY GO NOW?

Likened to Christmas, Onam marks the beginning of harvest and is the festival of gracious gift giving, sports and art in celebration of the culture and heritage in Kerala, "God's Own Country". It honours the annual return of the mythical King Mahabali, who once ruled Kerala at its most prosperous and peaceful age where there was no poverty, crime or corruption. The communities decorate their houses, give children toys and treats and reunite with their loved ones, while men dress as the contemporary depiction of the jovially plump and moustached Mahabali, visit homes with an air of goodwill and kindness.

Class and caste distinctions are overlooked during the festival. Join in as Keralites play friendly matches of tug-of-war and race in *vallamkali* snake boats along the river. Cultural capital Trichur upholds the 200-year-old *pulikali*, "play of the tigers", where men paint their bellies with remarkable tiger heads, parade the streets with hunters in pantomime, and celebrate the festival with a cortège of extravagantly decorated elephants while onlookers sing in festivity. Savour the delicious feasts

during *Thiruvonam*, the 10th and most important day of Onam, and soak in the local folk spirit and art abound in homes with red-painted conical clay figures set in the courtyards alongside *pookalam*, intricate flower carpets that mark the passing of each day with a new addition of flowers to the circle.

HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

⌚ Festivities commence on Atham, 10 days before *Thiruvonam*. Atham is on the 18th, and *Thiruvonam* is on 28th August this year.

❶ Travel to Kerala's capital, Thiruvananthapuram on a direct flight with IndiGo from Singapore or on Jet Airways and Malaysia Airlines from Kuala Lumpur with a layover at Mumbai or Delhi.

🏨 Stay at first class boutique hotels in Thiruvananthapuram such as Hycinth with its artistically designed, spacious and refreshingly bright décor (from US\$76.90; hycinthhotels.com). Alternatively, apply for homestay with families in Kerala for a more authentic experience with locals. Contact details may be found on keralatourism.org/homestays.



4

Regular Splendour
In The Grass
festival-goers often
opt for stays in
caravans at nearby
caravan parks

Byron Bay, Australia

WHY GO NOW?

Beyond its spectacular beaches and beautiful landscape, Byron Bay has much more to offer. This laid-back town hosts a myriad of events throughout the year. Back for another exhilarating weekend would be Splendour In The Grass, a popular arts and music festival.

Promising three days of fun, this year's event will feature over 100 entertaining acts, from well-regarded internationals to fresh homegrown talents. If you wish to challenge your brain, drop by the intellectual Splendour Forum by The Guardian for a meaningful discussion with an impressive list of clever and witty guests. Get your glue guns ready and engage your creative side at Splendour In The Craft by participating in workshops and body painting. The Tipi Forest also returns with a blend of sounds and beats from the best of Byron's producers and DJs. Event-goers will be treated to an array of gastronomical delights, including some of Australia's best food trucks. An addition would be Little Splendour, an area dedicated to children up to 15 years old, featuring a variety of fun activities including a jumping castle and character visits from fairies, pirates and princesses.

During the day, face painting, juggling, balloon twisting and more will be available for all to participate in.

After the festival, spend some time exploring the town's world famous nature and wildlife. Join a tour around the bay and have a once-in-a-lifetime experience of watching whales frolicking in the bay during their annual migration. Book now at www.byronbaywhalewatching.com.au.

HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

→ Splendour In The Grass takes place at North Byron Parklands from 24th to 26th July. Book tickets at moshtix.com.au.

❶ Fly by Qantas to Ballina from Singapore or Jetstar from Kuala Lumpur, both with layovers in Melbourne or Sydney.

❷ Belongil Fields Caravan Park and Discovery Holiday Park offer quality camping grounds as well as comfortable cabins. The Byron Luxury Beach Houses located along the coast offer a more lavish stay, with 4 bedrooms, wireless internet access and cutting-edge entertainment systems (from US\$768 with a minimum of four nights; www.byronluxurybeachhouses.com.au).

Sarawak, Malaysia

WHY GO NOW?

Known for its abundant wildlife and gorgeous landscapes, Sarawak brings nature and adventure lovers on a journey of discovery and delight. Rich in culture and heritage, Sarawak holds various events, including the iconic Rainforest World Music Festival.

Bringing together indigenous musicians as well as prominent artists from all around the world, this three-day event showcases a variety of lively acts, from local native chants to African dance and American folk music. The dazzling performances attract more than 20,000 people worldwide to witness this annual extravaganza. The band performances begin in the evening while educational lectures and workshops ranging from Sarawak culture to dance are held in the afternoons. Suitable for children, the fun-filled activities offer a hands-on experience of playing cultural instruments and learning traditional dances. Event-goers are also treated to an array of delectable South East Asian cuisines all day long. Don't forget to drop by the festival memorabilia counter to pick up Sarawak souvenirs and performers' CDs for

family back home.

Take a break from the vibrant festival atmosphere and explore the island's numerous national parks. One of which is the Miri-Sibuti Coral Reefs National Park, a well-known diving destination. Admire the abundance of pristine reefs and their plentiful inhabitants. Book a dive at www.cocodive.com.my.

HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

→ The Rainforest World Music Festival takes place from 7th to 9th August. Get your tickets at go.gorillatix.asia/rwmf.

❶ Fly SilkAir directly from Singapore to Kuching or Malaysia Airlines from Kuala Lumpur. Alternatively, fly Malindo Air from Singapore with a layover at Kuala Lumpur or directly from Kuala Lumpur.

❷ Located across the Sarawak Cultural Village is Damai Central which offers a camping ground. A few minutes' walk from the village is the Permai Rainforest Resort that promises a comfortable stay in log cabins, tree-top chalets and a campsite. This eco-resort offers modern amenities such as wi-fi in selected areas as well as Airport Shuttle services (from US\$712, permairainforest.com).



A local musician performs on a traditional instrument

5

Chill & Relax Promotion



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Travel Revolution Returns for a Second Round

Those who missed the opportunity for great promotions at the first Travel Revolution can expect even more at the second fair this year

The success of the inaugural Travel Revolution in April 2015 has spurned the organisers to push for a second fair in July this year. The last event saw more than 70,000 visitors over three days. The next event, scheduled for 24 to 26 July 2015, will see more than 70 exhibitors joining the already popular event, including heavyweights Chan Brothers Travel, CTC Travel, Dynasty Travel and SA Tours. International tourism organisations will also be joining once again and will include authorities from Australia, China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and New Zealand.

The event in July has already crossed its first milestone with its significant increase of 20 percent in booth take-up rate when

compared to April's event. This is a sure sign that more travel agencies and other exhibitors are supporting Travel Revolution and what it stands for with greater confidence. The fair is organised by the Singapore Outbound Travel Agents Association (SOTAA) and has Visa as the official card partner and AIG as the official travel insurer.

This second travel fair is definitely advantageous for travellers; Travel Revolution will be using its winning formula from the first event to draw potential holidaymakers to the fair. This will see better consumer benefits, much more competitive prices and a wider range of travel packages. Further discounts and even rebates will be made

available with the roping in of banks for promotions. Expect to see UOB, HSBC, OCBC and five other banks offering premiums with the use of their respective credit cards.

The venue remains at the conveniently located, city-centred Marina Bay Sands. Admission is free.

Travel Revolution 2015 – The Event

Date: 24-26 July 2015 (Friday - Sunday)

Time: 10am – 9pm

Venue: Marina Bay Sands B2 Expo Halls D – F

Free Admission

Website: TravelRevolution.sg



TRAVEL EXHIBITORS

Air China
Air Mauritius
Air New Zealand
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Apple Vacations Singapore
Australia
Avis Car Rental
Chan Brothers Express - Club Med Leading Booking Centre
Chan Brothers Travel / Chan's World Holidays / Asia Global Vacation / Euroworld
Chan Brothers Worldwide Cruise Centre
China National Tourist Office in Singapore
Costa Cruises by Stamford Discovery Cruise Centre
Cruise1st Singapore
CS Travel
CTC Travel
Dynasty Travel
EU Holidays / EU Asia Holidays
Euro-Asia Holidays
Famous World Tours
Farmosa Holiday
Focal Travel
Garuda Indonesia
Hertz Car Rental
Hong Thai Travel
I Love Holidays

Insight Vacations
Japan National Tourism Organization
JTB
Jun-Air Travel
Konsortium Express and Tours
Korea Tourism Organization
Lokopoko Travel
MISA Travel
Myanmar National Airlines
Nam Ho Travel
New Shan Travel
NTA Travel (Singapore)
Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau (OCVB)
Reollo Travel
SA Tours
Singapore Airlines
SingExpress Travel / Safe2Travel
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* Booking period : now until 31 August 2015; Staying period : now until 30 September 2015; Other terms and conditions apply.



20 Easy Adventures

Adventure need not be the preserve of hard-core explorers only - with a little imagination, some of the world's most exciting travel experiences are accessible to all

1 Get the bends in Norway

You needn't head to distant continents to drive one of the world's most exciting roads. Norway's Trollstigen is an audacious five-mile slither of asphalt that takes in a 1:12 gradient and 11 hairpin bends. It's not called the Troll's Road for nothing – there's a certain mythic beauty to the mountain road and the Trollstigen Valley from which it rises. Such is the drama of the journey; the road might also be the approach to Asgard, the legendary realm of the Norse gods. It's only open to vehicles from May or June to October or November – depending on the snowfall up in the mountains and, perhaps, the whim of the gods.



MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Trollstigen is roughly a six-hour drive from the capital Oslo, and four hours from Trondheim. For more ideas of what to do in the area, see visitnorway.com. Be sure to view the road from its viewing platform.
- KLM has flights to Trondheim with one stopover in Amsterdam from [singapore \(klm.com/singapore\)](http://klm.com/singapore). Car hire is readily available at the airport (from US\$123 per day, hertz.com).



2 Camel trek in Jordan's deserts



Ever since Lawrence of Arabia stomped through the deserts of Jordan nearly a century ago, Wadi Rum has fired the imaginations of would-be adventurers. A series of valleys carved through soaring sandstone and granite formations, Wadi Rum has a vast, natural beauty that is utterly spellbinding. The best way to experience it is as the local nomadic Bedouin do – on a camel. A trek might consist of a few slow hours' amble on camelback, stopping to share tea with a local as a fiery sunset turns the desert orange, or a more ambitious multi-day expedition, worthy of a proper bona fide explorer,

sleeping in a traditional goat-hair tent beneath a starry sky – just as Lawrence himself did almost a hundred years ago.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Bedouins of Wadi Rum is among the companies that can arrange camel-trekking itineraries (two days from US\$215; bedouinsofwadirum.com). Explore runs a nine-day Lawrence's Arabia tour including Wadi Rum, Petra and more (from US\$998; explore.co.uk).
- Wadi Rum is four hours' drive on sealed roads from Jordan's capital Amman. Emirates flies from Singapore to Amman via Dubai (emirates.com/sg). Airport car hire starts at around US\$31 per day (europcar.com).



3 Wander in Sri Lankan tea fields

Slurping tea is a veritable art form in Sri Lanka's Hill Country – a high-altitude region in the heart of the nation, home to mountains draped in mist and lakes so flat that they look like mirrors. Expat tea planters made their homes here in the 19th century, and echoes of the British Empire remain present even now, with period polo grounds, golf clubs and lavish bungalows in abundance. Their legacy on the landscape is even more pronounced: terraced hillsides carpeted with bright emerald tea bushes. Tea pickers in colourful saris move among them, plucking leaves with an almost hypnotic rhythm. To better understand their craft and its heritage, take a tour of the 1930s-era Norwood factory. After visiting the roasting, rolling and drying rooms, groups are given a tea-tasting session – smelling,



swirling and sipping their way through different local brews. Your afternoon cuppa will never taste the same again.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Stay at Ceylon Tea Trails, a bungalow resort spread out in locations close to the town of Hatton (bungalows for two from US\$508 full-board; teatrails.com). A tea factory tour is included in the price.
- Fly direct to Colombo on Singapore Airlines (singaporeair.com) or via Malaysia Airlines with a stopover in Kuala Lumpur (malaysiaairlines.com). From Colombo, it's a five-hour drive to the resort. Ceylon Tea Trails can arrange transfers, from US\$215.

PHOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP LEE HARVEY, JOE WINDSOR, WILLIAMS





4 Catch some rays in the Caribbean

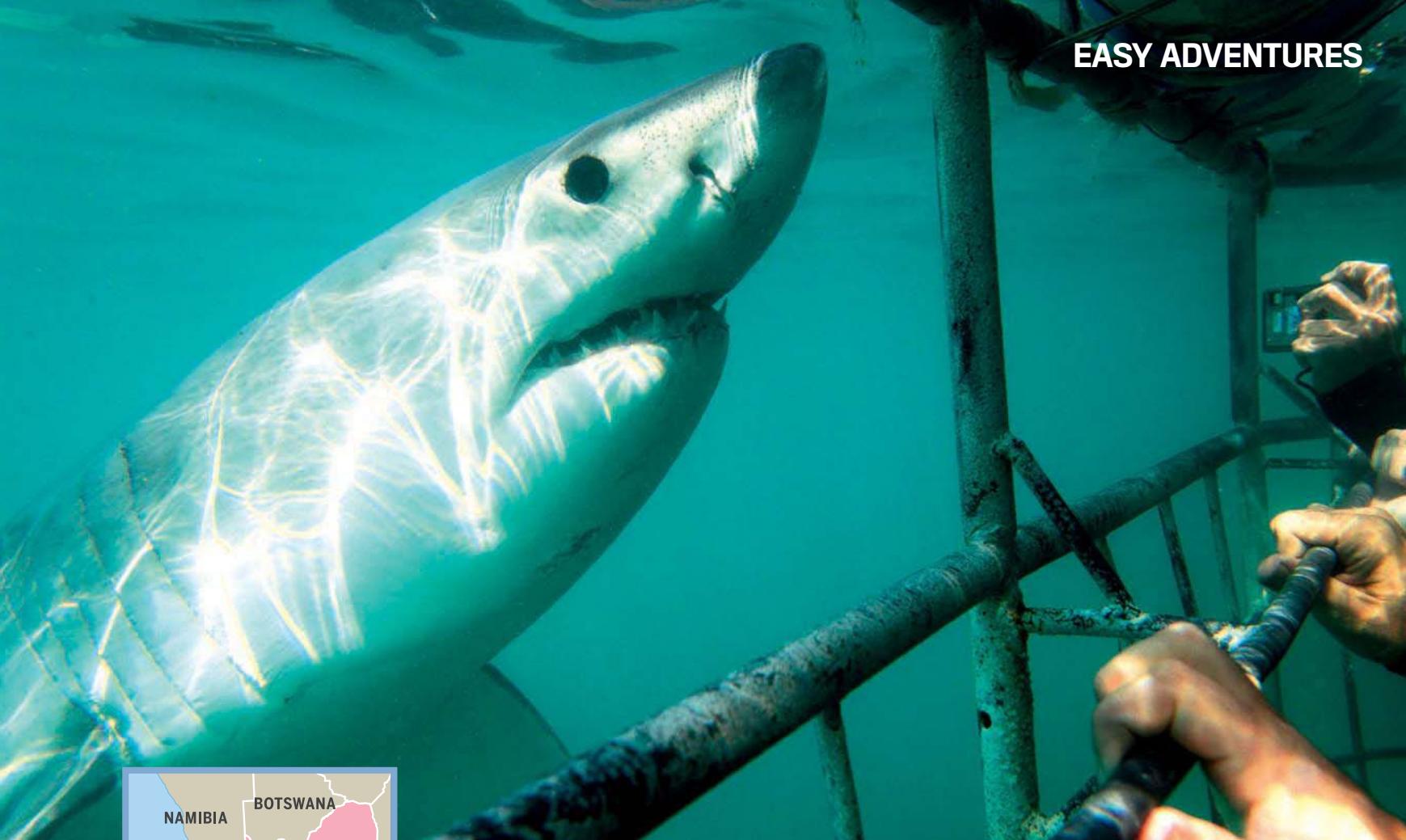
Watching a dozen metre-wide sea monsters – each armed with a venomous barbed sting – gliding towards you is one of the more electrifying experiences you can enjoy in three-metre-deep water. A sort of submarine dinner party takes place daily at Stingray City: a popular rallying point for rays in Grand Cayman's North Sound. Legend has it their gatherings are a legacy of local fisherfolk who cleaned their catch in these calm waters, attracting peckish fish. Today the fishermen have gone, but the rays still shimmy in for snacks. Kit up and prepare to feel the strange sucking kiss of these graceful creatures – just resist the temptation to touch them in return, to avoid interfering



with their protective coating. Though you are asked to shuffle rather than walk along the seabed so as not to step on a ray, the creatures are very docile and there is little to fear.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Stingray City is best dived in the afternoon, after the cruise ships have left. Red Sail Sports offers a Stingray City scuba dive, taking 2½ hours (from US\$80; redsailcayman.com).
- Fly to Grand Cayman with United via Tokyo and Houston (united.com).



5 Shark dive in South Africa

Fitness needed: basic. Dive experience: none. Nerves of steel: 100% essential. There's nothing especially difficult about cage-diving with great white sharks. You don't have to travel far offshore, and the only skill required thereafter is the ability to dangle just under the water wearing a snorkel. But – and it's a very large but – you need proper backbone to lurk inches from 1,000-plus kilos of potentially thrashing, cold-eyed predators. Great whites have a bad reputation, in no small part thanks to the movie Jaws; it's impossible to see these

PHOTOGRAPH: PHOTONONSTOP/SUPERSTOCK

creatures glide silently up without hearing John Williams' terror-inducing score. They are found in many seas and oceans, but the waters off South Africa, and in particular the fishing village of Gansbaai, are home to one of the largest concentrations of white sharks in the world. Here, a strip of ocean has been dubbed Shark Alley, the 60,000-strong resident colony of cape fur seals providing a constant buffet. It takes just 20 minutes to motor from the harbour to the big-fish feeding ground – but the biggest thrill is descending into a steel cage (attached to the boat so it can't sink or float away) to enter the shark's realm.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Marine Dynamics Shark Tours offers cage dives in Gansbaai, a two-hour drive from Cape Town (from US\$130; sharkwatchsa.com).
- Singapore Airlines flies to Cape Town with one stopover in Johannesburg (singaporeairlines.com).

6 Be a cowboy in Montana

If Westerns are to be believed, the key competencies for successful cowboyhood are gun-slinging, rootin' tootin' and the ability to turn a raucous bar dead silent by taking one small step through the front door. In the real world, a cowboy does much as his name suggests – herds cattle. There are few places better to master the skills than the prairies of Montana. Dude ranches abound in this empty state – perhaps the best named is Lonesome Spur ranch, a working cattle operation in Gallatin National Forest. Holing up in log cabins, apprentice cowboys spend days helping out on the ranch: fixing fences and honing their lassoing technique, maybe also perfecting the classic cowboy-style, misty-eyed squint into the middle distance. After long



days chasing misbehaving cows around the pastures, guests get to savour the poetic justice of prime Montana beef served for dinner.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Rates at the Lonesome Spur include meals (six nights from US\$1,650; lonesomespur.com). Transfers from Billings airport arranged with the range cost from US\$150.
- United offers tickets from Singapore to Billings airport in Montana, with two stopovers in Tokyo and Denver (united.com).

7 Sail Croatia's Dalmatian Coast



Local legend tells that Marco Polo was born on the Dalmatian island of Korčula – but you don't need to be a world-changing adventurer to discover Croatia's Adriatic shores. With reliable wind, abundant uncrowded anchorages and near-endless summer sun, the Dalmatian coast is one of the world's most easily navigated sailing destinations. Add to that the region's long and varied history, and you have the makings of the perfect maritime adventure. Island hopping off

Dalmatia is as much about time on land as time at sea. Cruise your yacht among the 147 (mostly uninhabited) Kornati islands, where impossibly clear waters fringe sculpted cliffs and caves. Try Mljet island as well, with its pine-forested national park. Or simply see where the wind takes you; there are countless stretches of sand and secret coves only a sailor can reach.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

● Sunsail is among the companies

offering sailing courses, with a five-day programme based near Trogir (from US\$1,312; sunsail.com). May, June, September and October are the seasons preferred by experienced sailors in Croatia: though winds may be more challenging, there's more solitude to be had on the water.

● Split airport is closest to Trogir. It is easiest to fly on Lufthansa, which makes one stopover in Frankfurt before continuing on to Split (lufthansa.com).





8 Drift through Namibian skies



The first passengers to travel in a hot-air balloon were not aeronautical engineers – they weren't even human. In 1783, under the gaze of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette, French inventors elevated a duck, a rooster and a sheep on a flight that lasted a full eight minutes. Today, you might hope to stay aloft for a little longer, but the basics of lighter-than-air aviation haven't changed that much. Balloons still need large open areas in which to land – which

is one reason why the Namib desert in southwestern Africa is one of the best places to do it, with around 50,000 square miles of predominantly empty space. But the main reason to ascend here is simply because it's so utterly astonishing: the dunes of Sossusvlei create sensuous billows of orange sand, crafted by the breeze into endless and ever-changing crests and swirls – features that can only be appreciated by creatures who soar high in the air above them.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Namib Sky Adventures runs balloon trips over Sossusvlei – the precise departure location is dependent on wind conditions, with lift-off happening just before sunrise. The company offers pick-ups from several local lodges (from US\$370 per person, including a champagne breakfast; namibsky.com).
- Fly Singapore Airlines to Johannesburg first (singaporeair.com) and then switch to South African Airways to get to Windhoek, Namib (flysaa.com). From here, it's a six-hour drive southwest to Sossusvlei – hire private transport at the airport.



9 Drive through the outback

Travelling around Oz in a Kombi van isn't a mere holiday: it's a rite of passage for Australians, the modern-day equivalent of an ancient Homeric odyssey. Something about the scale of Australia entices travellers to stock up their "eskies" (coolers) and hit the road in classic Volkswagen campervans – vehicles that have long been a part of Aussie highway folklore. Whether you head north to the Queensland coast from Sydney, west from Adelaide, or do a circuit of the whole mainland (more than 9,000 miles in case you were wondering), there are certain givens. You'll have a near-miss with a suicidal wallaby. You'll have a panic about petrol in the back of beyond. You'll also develop an obsession with kitsch, oversized roadside objects – from humongous fibreglass dinosaurs to giant guitars, big things are a big part of highway culture down



under. You're also guaranteed to have the time of your life.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Go Kombi offers modern and restored campervans to rent in Rockingham in Western Australia (from US\$138 per day; gokombi.com), while Hire a Kombi rents classic vehicles from Melbourne (from US\$125 per day; hireakombi.com).
- Emirates, Qantas and Singapore Airlines fly direct to Melbourne from Singapore (singaporeair.com). Any big Australian road trip requires careful planning: be sure to take spare tyres and plenty of water.



10 Hike the West Highland Way



Scotland's most famous long-distance walk runs almost 100 miles through constantly changing Highland scenery – a mix of Munros (peaks above 3,000 feet), hauntingly barren moors and back-and-forth switchbacks up heather-strewn slopes. One of the highlights along the route is the view from Conic Hill, with the sparkling waters of Loch Lomond grabbing the attention below. It's no wonder the planners chose to run an entire section

of the trail through the majestic valley of Glencoe, where the grand valley is shut in by wild and precipitous mountains. Crown your accomplishment at the northern trailhead by summing Ben Nevis – and looking south at the landscape you've just conquered.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

• The West Highland Way runs 96 miles from Milngavie on the outskirts of Glasgow to Fort William, and takes around seven to nine days

to finish. Many companies offer guided and self-guided tours along the trail – Sherpa Expeditions' self-guided packages include bag transfers, meals and accommodation (from US\$880; sherpaexpeditions.com). The trail is best walked northward with the wind at your back.

• British Airways (ba.com) flies to Glasgow via Heathrow or, choose to travel by train from London Euston (from US\$65; virgintrains.co.uk). From Glasgow Central, it's a 25-minute ride on a suburban train to Milngavie (from US\$4.90).

PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL GREEVES/MOMENT/GETTY IMAGES

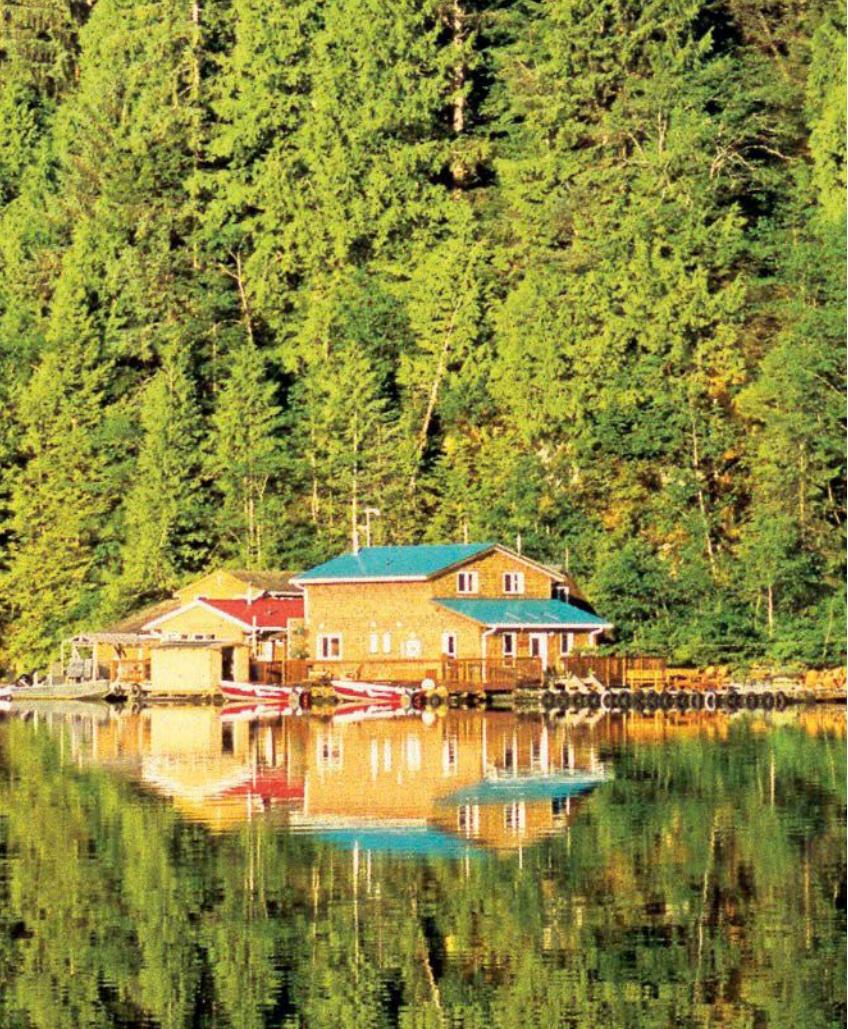
11 Trek Corsica's GR20 Trail



Corsica's Grande Randonnée (meaning, very literally, 'great walk') is a challenge to make the mouth and, on some stretches the eyes, water. Following ancient shepherds' tracks, the 110-mile GR20 path weaves through the mountainous interior of this rugged Mediterranean island. It is one of Europe's toughest long-distance walks. All the same, while the going can be tough, the payoff is immense: expect alpine lakes, forests of chestnut and oak, and ospreys wheeling about over the crags.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- UTracks offers a guided seven-day walking tour over the somewhat easier southern part of the trail, overnighting in simple mountain refuges (from US\$1225; utracks.com).
- Air France flies from Singapore to Figari airport at the southern end of the GR20, changing at Paris (airfrance.sg).



12 Seek the wild in Canada

Who doesn't love a good wilderness lodge? At their best, they represent a chunk of paradise that allows the guest to leave the world and all of its woes behind. Great Bear Lodge may well be that paradise. Floating on an estuary in British Columbia and only accessible by seaplane, it's set deep in the Great Bear Rainforest, one of the largest tracts of temperate rainforest in the world (covering an area about the size of Ireland). Wildlife encounters are central to the experience – and in particular the chance to

see bears in the wild. Grizzlies, black bears and rare white spirit bears roam the woods. Take a boat trip to see them mating in spring, and fishing for salmon after the romance has faded and tummies are rumbling in the autumn. Wolves, too, can sometimes be heard howling behind the wall of spruces and cedars behind the lodge, while whales and dolphins have been known to break the still waters outside. The greatest pleasure, however, is simply spending time at the lodge: lazing on the timber deck by day, and by night dining on fresh salmon plucked from the surrounding waters, just like the bears do.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- The Great Bear Lodge has just eight bedrooms, and is 50 miles north of Port Hardy. Rates include seaplane transfers from Port Hardy, all food and drink on board and bear-watching excursions (from US\$1,560 for three nights; greatbeartours.com).
- The nearest big airport is Vancouver: Air Canada flies from Singapore via Hong Kong (aircanada.com).

PHOTOGRAPHS: JUSTIN FOULKE/BANANA PANCAKE LTD, TOM RIVEST/GREAT BEAR NATURE TOURS, TRAVEL LIBRARY LIMITED/SUPERSTOCK

13 Watch whales in New Zealand

Hop on a catamaran in Kaikoura on the east coast of New Zealand's South Island and you're likely to have an experience you'll never forget. Chugging out from the coast, the boat is soon dwarfed by the snowtipped mountains that loom over the water. To the bow, the ocean stretches out to the horizon. Birds float in the breeze above. Then, in the distance, the water breaks as if it is boiling, and the nose of a sperm whale lifts into the air with a spray and splutter; its colossal body follows, before smacking back into the deep fathoms of the Pacific, exiting with a wave of its Y-shaped tail. The only thing that will top the sight is seeing another emerge a few seconds later.



weather (from US\$115; whalewatch.co.nz). Buses run from Christchurch every three hours (from US\$12; intercity.co.nz).

- Fly direct to Christchurch by Air New Zealand (airnewzealand.co.nz).





14 Kayak in Vietnam

With thousands of craggy limestone peaks and islands lapped by blue waters, Halong Bay is one of Asia's defining landscapes. The iconic way to experience it is on one of the many wooden junks that thread their way between the many islands, but these days it's also become a favourite with kayakers seeking a more intimate look at its incredible rock features. Typical of most limestone landscapes, Halong Bay is studded with caves,

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP LEE HARVEY/CULTURA LIMITED/SUPERSTOCK

arches and tall pillars – whichever way you point the prow of your plastic boat, you're guaranteed to find some extraordinary new highlight, and there are temples hidden away in the rock faces too. Multi-day kayaking trips are usually staged from one of the venerable old junks, where guests tuck into Vietnamese food, fall asleep to the sound of lapping waves, and wake to misty dawns. Don't leave without mooring your kayak at least once at Titop island – a pyramid-shaped peak with great views over the otherworldly landscape of Halong Bay, especially beautiful at sunset.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Handspan Travel Indochina offers a Halong Explorer and Kayak Discovery tour, with guests sleeping and eating on a traditional junk and visiting a floating village (from US\$294; handspan.com). Tours include transfers to and from Hanoi.
- Vietnam Airlines flies direct to Hanoi from Singapore (vietnamairlines.com).

15 Scale Mount Snowdon

Wales' highest mountain region is the next-best thing to climbing Everest. Well, sort of. It was here, after all, that members of the 1953 Everest expedition – including Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay – trained for their big moment, as did the team that summited Kanchenjunga in 1955.

Climbing headquarters is the Pen-Y-Gwryd Hotel, set in the pass between the Snowdon and the Glyderau range, which has a collection of memorabilia from the expedition and a ceiling adorned with the signatures of expedition members. If all this inspires you to stage your own expedition, drop by the Plas y Brenin climbing centre a few minutes' drive away. It offers a range of guided treks through the sheep-dotted, slate-quarried Welsh landscapes, from leisurely ambles to high-octane scrambles to the peak of Mount Snowdon itself.



MAKE IT HAPPEN

- The Pen-Y-Gwryd Hotel is close to the town of Beddgelert (from US\$161; pyg.co.uk). Plas y Brenin climbing centre is in the nearby village of Capel Curig – its 'classic weekend walk' includes accommodation, learning navigation skills and a crash course in understanding and reading mountain weather (US\$300; pyb.co.uk).
- The easiest way to reach Snowdonia is via the city of Bangor. Take a flight from Singapore by British Airways to Heathrow (ba.com). Virgin Trains then runs services from London Euston (from US\$70; virgintrains.co.uk). From here, local buses serve the walking centres of Betws-y-Coed, Beddgelert, Capel Curig and Llanberis.

16 Sleep in the savannah



To truly experience the African wilderness, you need to sleep in it. On a tented safari, you drift into slumber to the sounds of the savannah – the racket of a pack of baboons running through the camp or the heart-stopping roar of a distant lion – knowing that just a thin piece of canvas separates you from that herd of wildebeest or the family of elephants ambling nearby. Mornings start with a mug of coffee in a folding chair while a line of gazelles bounds past. Kenya offers tented safaris for all sizes of wallet – even the cheapest come with creature comforts such as hot showers and hot meals. One of the best budget options is Aruba-Mara

Camp, which has simple but elegant safari tents on a shaded patch of land by Talek Gate in the Masai Mara National Reserve.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- In addition to its own spacious safari tents, Aruba-Mara Camp has room for guests bringing their own tents (safari tents from US\$32 per person based on two sharing; aruba-safaris.com).
- Emirates flies to Nairobi from Singapore via Dubai (emirates.com/sg). From here, it's a five-hour drive west to Talek. The camp can suggest good taxi services, which should work out cheaper than driving there yourself in a 4x4 hire car. Kenya Airways also flies from Nairobi to Olkiombo airstrip, near the camp.



17 Go on a tiger safari in India



A tiger inches forward, muscles taut beneath its fur. In a flash, the dust kicks up, and the big cat has struck before anyone can blink: its hapless target, a wild boar, barely has time to struggle before the kill is complete. This is an everyday scene at Pench National Park, the real-life setting for Kipling's *Jungle Book*. Located in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, the wildlife-rich retreat is home to an estimated 25 Bengal tigers, gaur (Indian bison), leopards and some 300 species of birds. By day, visitors patrol the forests in 4x4s in search of the creatures, setting out from the camp in the hazy dawn. By night there are certainly worse places to retreat to than Baghvan: a hunting lodge lit by hurricane lamps deep in the forest, with treetop sleeping platforms adding to the romance.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Rates at Baghvan include 4x4 safaris and meals (from US\$385 per person based on two sharing; taj safaris.com).
- Air India and Jet Airways fly from Singapore to nearby Nagpur airport in central India, changing at Mumbai (jetairways.com).



PHOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP LEE HARVEY; MARK READ

EASY ADVENTURES



18 Take a Californian coastal road-trip



California's Big Sur is fringed by what is possibly the world's most distinguished ribbon of tarmac. Coastal State Route 1 has inspired film-makers and writers, been name-checked in platinum records, and still makes most drivers feel like they're starring in a cinematic car chase. It's easy to see why: the road bends gracefully from one location-shot panorama to the next, the thundering waves of the Pacific down below providing a rousing score. Driving from one end to the other takes only two or three hours, but there are lots of reasons to pull over. Heading south from the town of Carmel, the road runs past the beaches and coves of Point Lobos State Reserve, where sea lions sunbathe beside churning seas (note: swimming here isn't

safe, unless you're a sea lion). The view from Bixby Creek Bridge (pictured) demands a stop, and the road then continues through a landscape of cliffs, redwood forests, waterfalls and lonely lighthouses. Hearst Castle, the 1920s hilltop home of news tycoon William Randolph Hearst, makes for a grand finale. Appropriately enough, it provided inspiration for Big Sur homeowner Orson Welles' landmark movie, *Citizen Kane*.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- The Big Sur stretches south from Monterey, 100 miles south of San Francisco, and ends near Gorda. For more info see bigsurcalifornia.org.
- Singapore Airlines and United fly to San Francisco via Hong Kong (united.com). Car hire starts at around US\$46 per day.





19 Cycle in Cuba

Experiencing Cuba on two wheels may be the best way to see the Caribbean's largest island. Days are spent drifting along country roads, past

farmers in the fields and locals offering cold drinks from their front porches. Pedal from one end of the country to the other and you'll cover more than 800 miles, but there are easy chunks to enjoy. You might choose to take the bike lane along Havana's seafront, passing fishermen and canoodling lovers, or pedal along the coast, with the added bonus of discovering a beach around every bend. You could also slog

up the island's 1,200-metre thigh-shredding peak of La Gran Piedra. By travelling under your own steam, you'll discover a Cuba out of bounds to the average bus-hopping tourist.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Intrepid's 15-day 'Cycling Cuba' itinerary begins and ends in Havana (from US\$2,695; intrepidtravel.com).
- From Singapore, fly KLM (klm.com/singapore) to Havana with one stopover in Amsterdam.

20 Walk the Great Wall

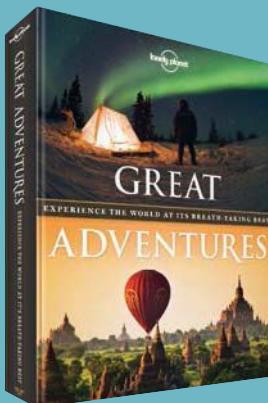
Here, history literally crunches beneath your feet. The protected lands of China are to the south; marauding hordes are to the north. At least, that's how it was proposed when the Chinese first built this incredible structure more than two millennia ago. The Great Wall of China once extended anything between 3,500 and 13,000 miles, so walking the whole thing is harder than it sounds – the wall is in disrepair in many areas, and finding its course can be a challenge. Fortunately, lots of companies offer guided walks over surviving parts – including the majestic stretch between Jinshanling and Simatai.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Exodus offers a 10-day 'Walking the Great Wall' tour, including the Jinshanling to Simatai stretch (from US\$2,310 per person; exodus.co.uk). The tour begins and ends in Beijing.
- Air China and Singapore Airlines fly direct to Beijing from Singapore (airchina.sg). 



Lonely Planet's Great Adventures (US\$24.99 paperback, US\$39.99 hardback) has more on many of the adventures featured here – subscribe (p18) and get a free copy.

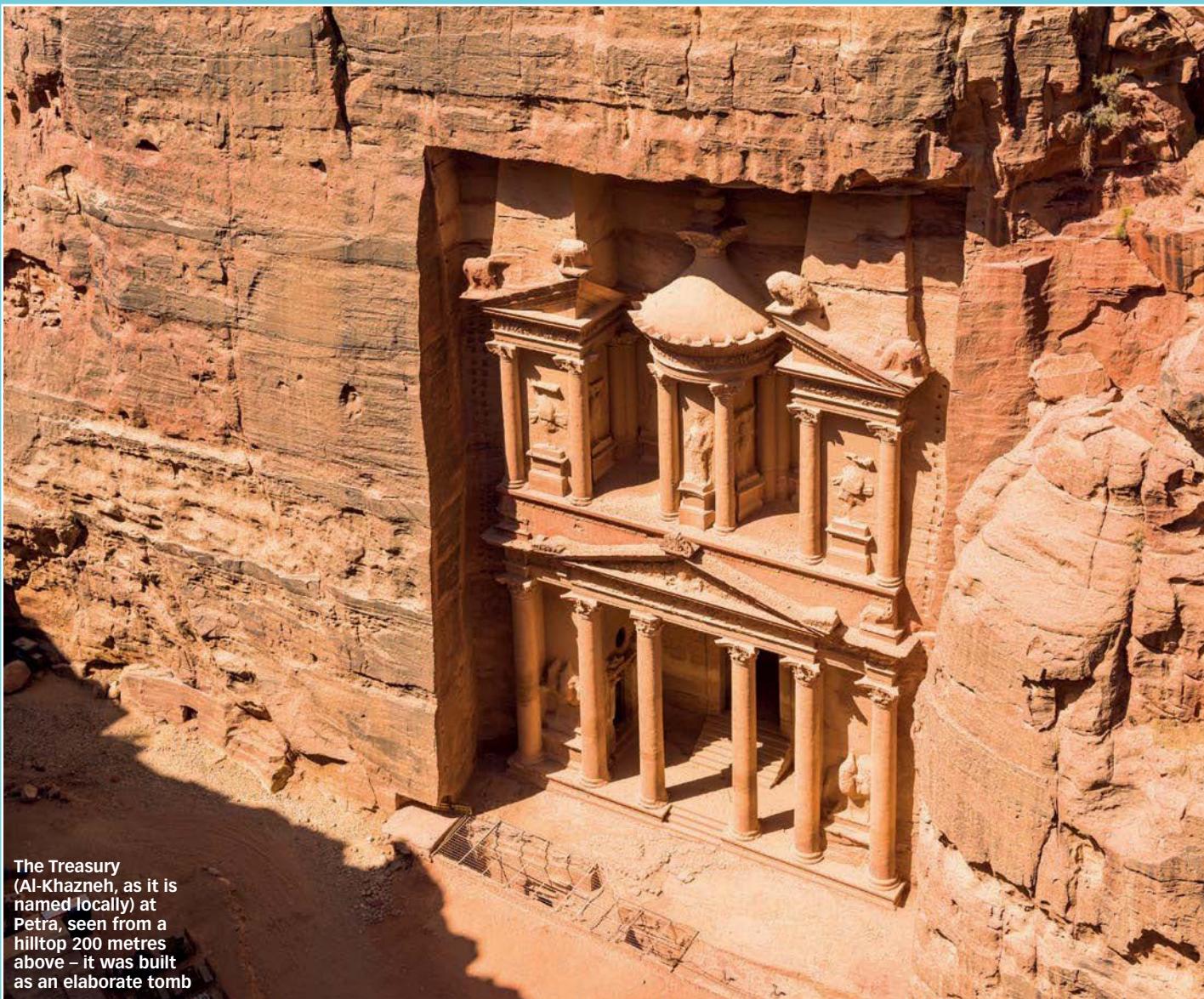


Great Escape

JORDAN

As the British winter approaches, flee to this safe, friendly kingdom on the Arabian Peninsula for an adventure in the old style. Start by heading to the lowest point on Earth to float on a false sea, before exploring an ancient hidden city, camping in the desert and making culinary discoveries in Amman

WORDS AMANDA CANNING • PHOTOGRAPHS TOM MACKIE



The Treasury (Al-Khazneh, as it is named locally) at Petra, seen from a hilltop 200 metres above – it was built as an elaborate tomb

Plan your trip

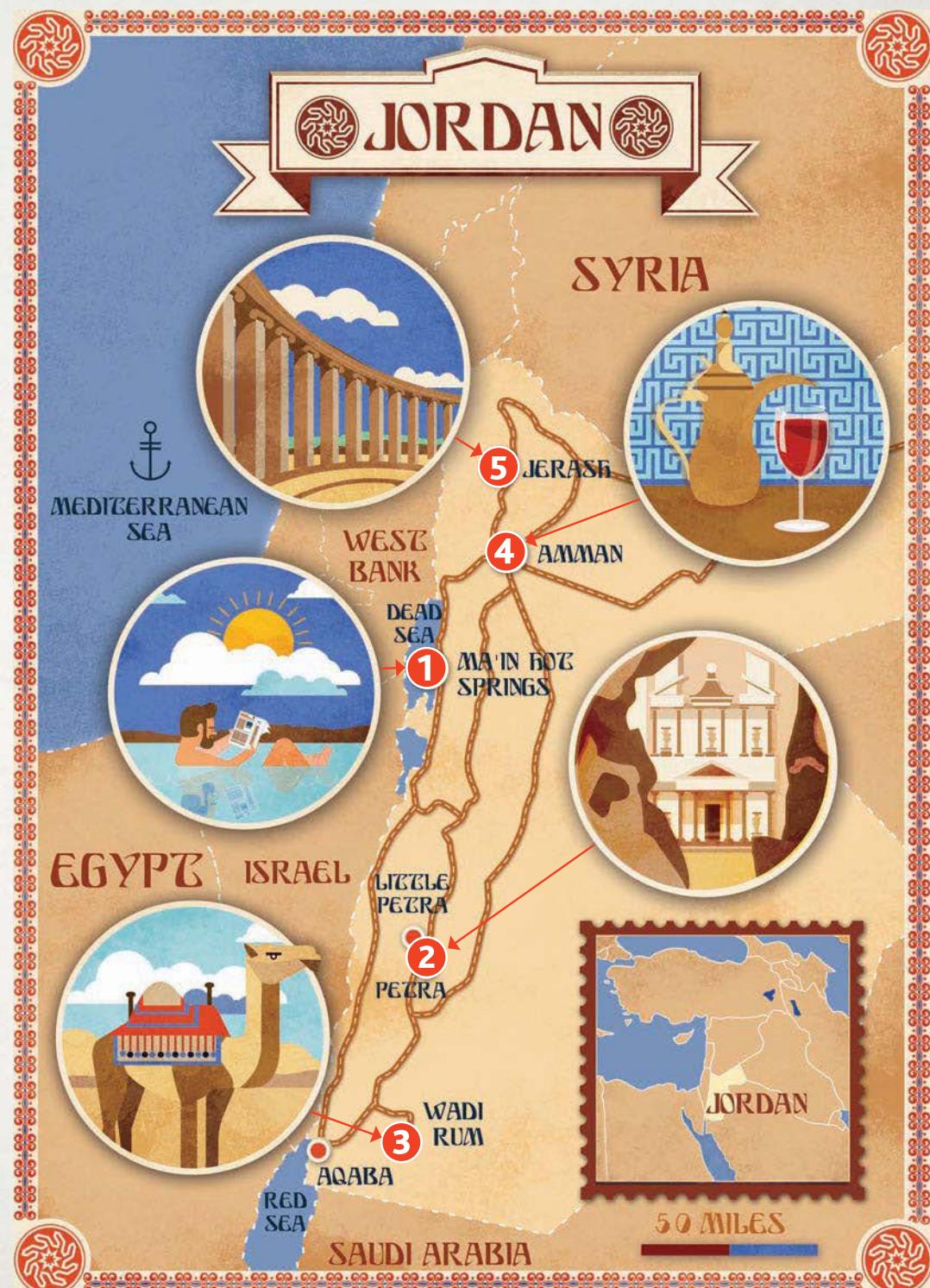
1 Dip your toes, and then the rest of you, into the **Dead Sea**, before heading to the mountains to wallow in hot springs (p61)

2 Make your way to the ancient, rose-red city of **Petra**, hidden to the outside world for centuries (p62)

3 Clamber on a camel's back to trek across the dunes, before a night under the stars in **Wadi Rum** (p65)

4 Tuck into some of Jordan's finest produce in **Amman**, then learn to cook classic Arabic dishes (p68)

5 End your trip in the Roman city of **Jerash**, imagining life here 2,000 years ago (p69)



MAP ILLUSTRATION: ALEX VERRILLE. PHOTOGRAPHS: TOM MACKIE, IMAGEBROKER/ALAMY



HOW TO GET THERE

Fly Turkish Airlines or Emirates from Singapore to Amman Queen Alia International Airport with one layover, from US\$1,286.05 (turkishairlines.com). Or travel by Malaysian Airlines or Lufthansa from Kuala Lumpur, with one stop in between, from US\$966 (malaysianairlines.com).

HOW TO GET AROUND

Jordan is a joyfully easy country to travel around, in part due to its small size. You could drive from top to bottom in little over five hours if you wanted to. The national bus company has services between the main towns, and limited options to Petra and the Dead Sea. For full flexibility, you're better off hiring a car – roads are in good condition and other drivers tend to be less manic (notwithstanding liberal use of the car horn) compared to other countries in the Middle East. The traffic in Amman makes it frustrating, and nerve-wracking, to navigate, so pick up and drop off your car at the airport, a little outside of the city. The usual suspects have offices there (week's hire from US\$360.30; hertz.jo). There's no need to rent a 4x4.

WHAT TO BUDGET

Staying in budget guesthouses, eating only from markets and street stalls, and using public transport; you could survive in Jordan on around US\$61.35 per day. Factor in a midrange hotel, car hire, guided tours and meals in local restaurants, and the figure could rise to US\$153.30-plus a day. The national currency is the dinar, and is available from ATMs at all the main sites.

WHEN TO GO

High season is September to October and March to May, when the weather is warm but bearable. Note that price hikes are common in this period and hotels get booked far in advance. One of the most pleasant times to visit is

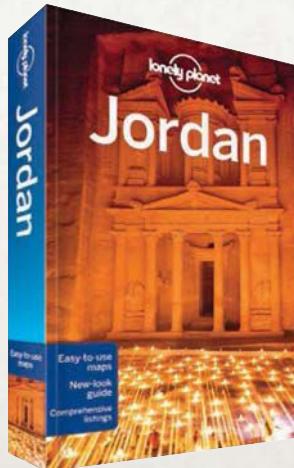
winter, from November to February, though be aware the desert gets very cold at night during this period. If you can take the extreme temperatures of summer, it can be an excellent time to travel, with fewer tourists around.

WHO CAN HELP

With English-speaking staff at most hotels and all major sites, it's easy to travel independently in the country. If you'd rather leave the hassle of planning your trip to someone else, there are plenty of operators who can help. Intrepid Travel's 'Jordan Experience' itinerary includes Petra, Wadi Rum, the Dead Sea, Amman and diving in the Red Sea (from US\$1188.10 for eight days; intrepidtravel.com). At the luxury end of the market, Audley has a number of tours, from short breaks to Petra (from US\$1517.70) to its two week long 'Jordan Discovered', covering all the main sites as well as hiking in the gorges of the Dana Nature Reserve (from US\$3548.95; audleytravel.com; prices include flights).

HOW TO PLAN

See Lonely Planet's Jordan (US\$17.49) and the Jordan tourist board's official site, visitjordan.com, which has a wealth of information on general travel in the region and specific sites.



ON THE ROAD



Eat

Mansaf – the national dish is lamb cooked in fermented yoghurt and served with rice and pine nuts. Bedouins have a version cooked underground.

Say
'Mafi mushkila' – No problem.

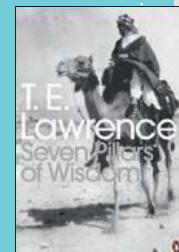
Drink

Arak – made from grapes and aniseed, this alcoholic drink is served in small glasses and mixed with water.



Read

Seven Pillars of Wisdom, by TE Lawrence – an epic account of the soldier's two years in Wadi Rum.



Buy

A camel-shaped fridge magnet. It's impossible to leave Jordan without something camely in your bag.



Diving At The Red Sea



Aqaba is a fairly nondescript resort town in southern Jordan, but it is the gateway to one of the world's legendary marine sites: the Red Sea (above). With pristine reefs and clear waters, divers and snorkellers flock to the 17-mile strip of coastline. Plenty of outfitters will take you to the best sites, including the Cedar Pride, a coral-encrusted sunken ship, and the Power Station wall, excellent for turtle encounters. Aqaba Adventure Divers runs open-water PADI courses for newbies (from US\$459.90; aqaba-diving.com) as well as guided dives (from US\$33.75) and full-day boat tours (from US\$61.35). It can also arrange accommodation and excursions to Petra and Wadi Rum. The weather conditions between late January to mid May make it the best time to visit.



**Follow in
the footsteps
of explorers...**

A Bedouin guide
leads his two
dromedary camels
over the tall dunes
of Wadi Rum





Salt crystals form on the shore of the Dead Sea, 400m below sea level and nearly nine times saltier than the oceans – Israel is on the horizon

1. The Dead Sea

Begin your journey at the lowest point on Earth – the Dead Sea. Once you've lathered yourself in mud and floated in the salty water, head to the mountains for a hot soak



MARAM BAZ SLAPS thick black mud over the last remaining patch of bare skin on her body and stands, feet apart, on the rocky beach. There she remains, statue-still bar the odd wiggle of her fingers, for 10 minutes, slowly baking in the 40°C heat. Fully cooked, she wades into the water to join her cousins, who have already scrubbed off their mud suits, and bob, laughing, on the surface.

An interior designer from the capital Amman, Maram comes to the Dead Sea every year for a few days' escapism. The high mineral content in this, one of the world's saltiest lakes, is said to work all sorts of miracles on the health, treating the most stubborn eczemas and reducing the pain of arthritic joints. Maram shouts to the shore: 'Even if it doesn't actually work, just by being here, I feel that it does. In the water, I am relaxed straight away. And this mud,' she says, pointing to a slimy arm, 'it's like putting on an expensive cream for free.'

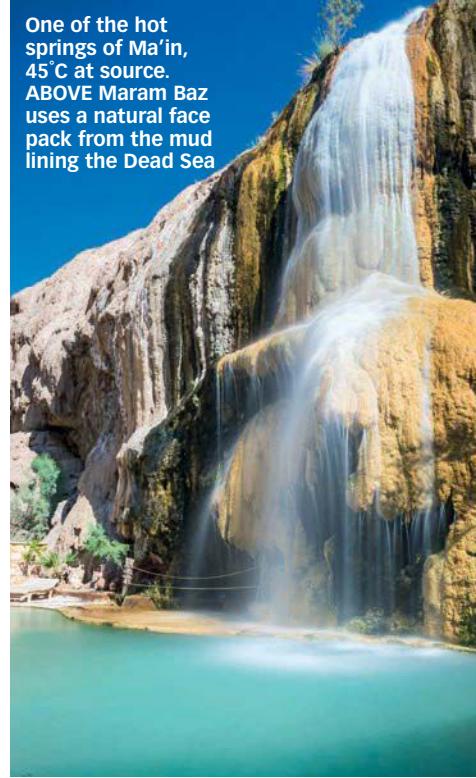
The sentiment is shared by many. In the resorts that line the shore in ever-increasing numbers, scenes are repeated of people in full holiday mode: Russians in enormous sun hats and plump dressing gowns pad between spa treatments; Saudi mothers in burkinis chase their children around swimming pools, ready to stuff their

limbs into armbands; and pale northern Europeans step gingerly into the Dead Sea, sunburnt shoulders soon forgotten as they flop into the water and instantly float, as if on invisible lilos.

Without dramatic intervention, however, these are not scenes that will be repeated for much longer. Pale horizontal stripes in the rock around the lake, visible above the twinkling salt crystals that form on its banks, show a waterline that has receded a metre a year for decades. With few water sources, the Dead Sea is indeed dying. There are plans to bring it back to life before it's too late – a proposed canal carrying water from the Red Sea in the south of the country could soon see levels rising again.

In the cliffs rearing up from the valley floor, there are already signs of watery abundance. Deep crevasses in the sandstone spout date palms, wild figs, oleander trees and ferns. A 20-minute drive past them on a sharply winding road leads to Ma'in Hot Springs, where waterfalls plunge into milky blue pools. Swallows, trumpeter finches, marbled white butterflies and red dragonflies dart and flit, enjoying the baths as much as the young

One of the hot springs of Ma'in, 45°C at source. ABOVE Maram Baz uses a natural face pack from the mud lining the Dead Sea



children who leap into them screaming. The area is home to around 60 thermal springs, their waters reaching temperatures of 40 to 60°C – swimming in one is like choosing to take the hottest bath imaginable, in a heatwave. When it comes to water, Jordan doesn't do average.

From the nearby panorama, the Dead Sea, 400m below, looks vast, an out-of-place blue smear in the lunar landscape. As the sun sinks behind the hills of Israel, visible to the west, families gather to take pictures and suck on hookah pipes. The excited cries of the day die down as they watch the Dead Sea turn violet, then grey, and the lights come on in Jerusalem across the water.

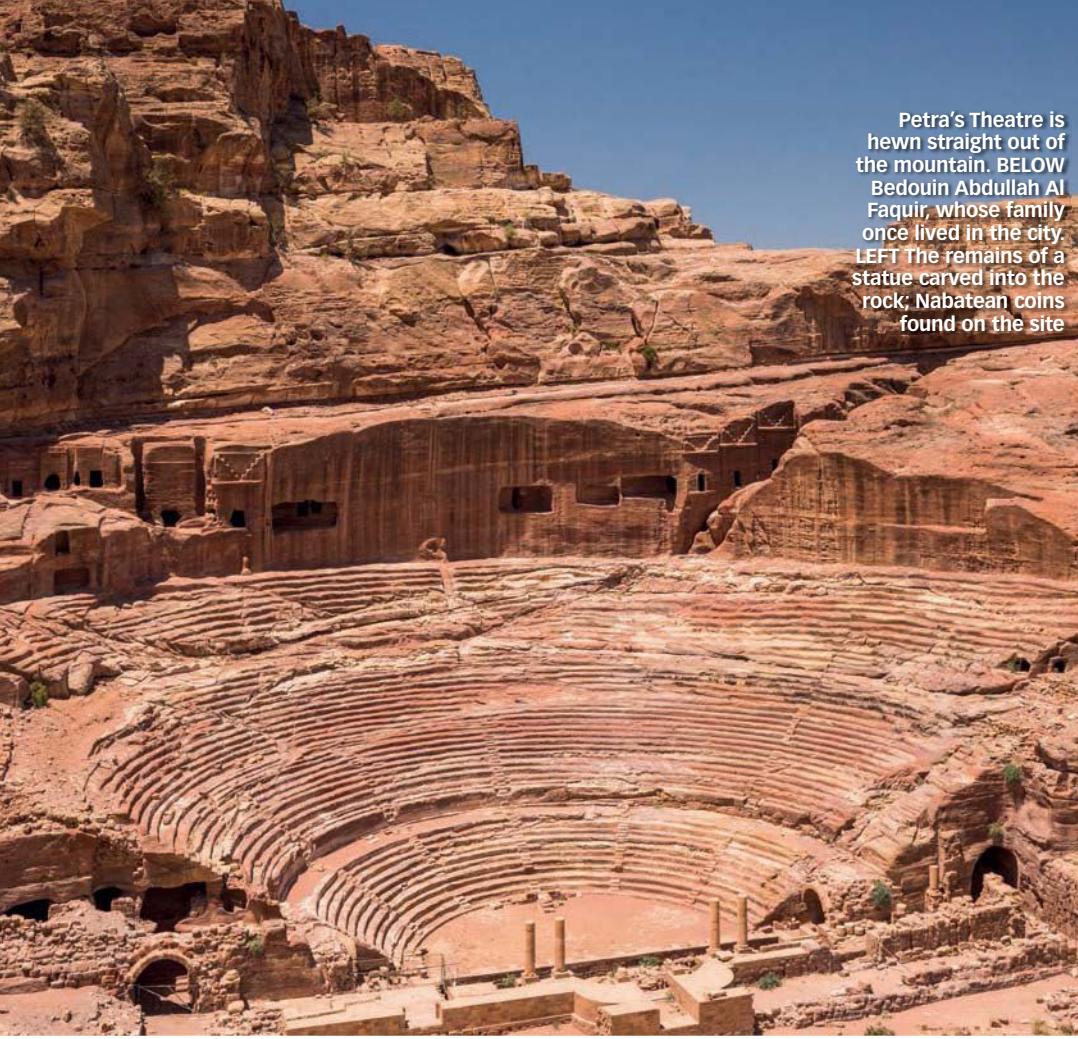
Now you've eased your way into the trip, it's time for adventure. Drive 120 miles (around three hours) south down the King's Highway to the town of Wadi Musa, gateway to the mysterious city of Petra. 

Essentials

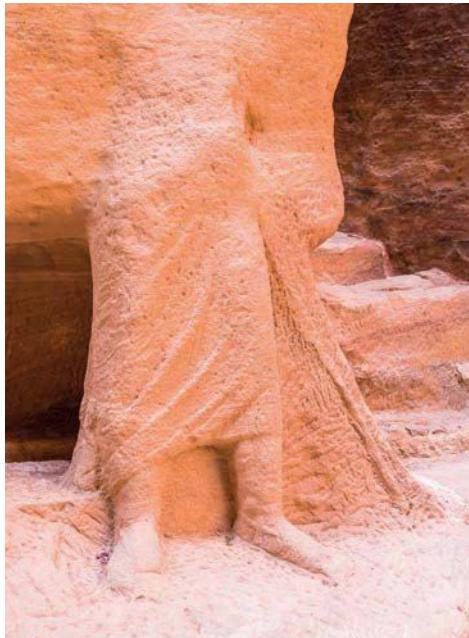


 **Kempinski Dead Sea** The huge Kempinski (above) drops down to the Dead Sea in a series of steps, each accommodating a pool or terrace, and is home to the Middle East's largest spa. Quality of service and attention to detail is top notch throughout (from US\$321.95; kempinski.com).

 **Evasion Ma'in Hot Springs** This beautiful hotel makes the most of its position in the hot-springs area, with views of gushing waterfalls from its terrace and rooms. Inside, it's all dark wood, day beds and ambient lounge music. The hotel has its own spring-fed pool, and there's a separate spa (from US\$161; sixsenses.com).



Petra's Theatre is hewn straight out of the mountain. BELOW Bedouin Abdullah Al Faquir, whose family once lived in the city. LEFT The remains of a statue carved into the rock; Nabatean coins found on the site



2. Petra

There are few places that conjure up the romance of adventure better than Petra, the rose-red city hidden in the mountains and full of the secrets of its lost inhabitants



JOHANN BURCKHARDT had always fancied himself as an explorer. It was the ambition of the young Swiss man to discover the source of the Niger, and he set off from England to Syria in 1809 with that very task in mind, believing a good grasp of Arabic and Islam would ease his travels through Africa. The discovery that made his name was almost accidental. Hearing rumours of a city long lost to the Western world hidden in the mountains of southern Jordan, he decided on a quick detour from his planned route to Egypt and the start of his expedition proper. Three years after he left the club rooms of London, and disguised as an Arab to avert suspicion from local Bedouins wary of treasure hunters, he made his way

through a narrow passage blocked by laurel bushes and subject to flash flooding. The city that lay at the other end had not featured on a map for 500 years. Its rediscovery put Burckhardt's name firmly in the history books – and he had yet to step one foot in Africa.

It is a rather easier route into Petra today, but none of the thrill its earlier explorers must have felt has diminished. The main way in is still through a mile-long gorge, the Siq, a deep dark slash in the mountains that gives few hints of the magic to come. The Nabatean people, who built Petra around the time of Christ, certainly knew a thing or two about creating drama. With their fortunes made collecting taxes along the trade routes that passed through the Middle East from India to Africa, they once

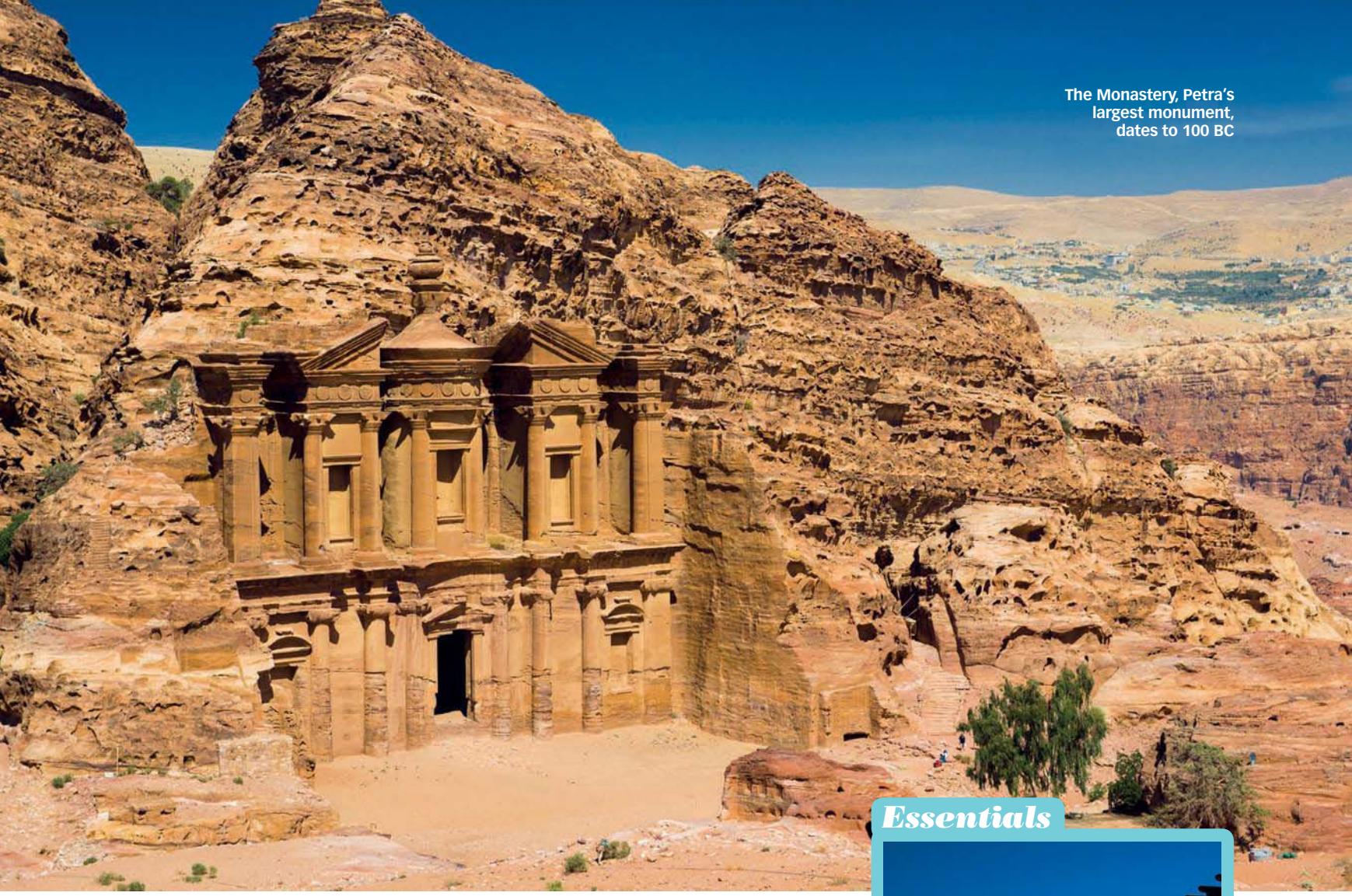
ruled a kingdom four times bigger than the present Jordan. The weary traveller entering the Siq during the city's pomp would have found the path lit by oil lamps, the voices of fellow traders echoing off the steep walls as they tramped ever further in. Now, several nights a week, candles once again light the way for visitors, illuminating the striped patterns in the pinky-red sandstone walls as they would have done 2,000 years ago.

Before they make the walk down the Siq, the average tourist in Petra will have seen a thousand pictures of its star attraction, but the first sight still comes as an astonishing surprise. With no prior announcement, the stone-hewn temple of the Treasury looms up through a slit in the rock walls, the gorge ends, and all is



A first glimpse of the Treasury from the Siq, a natural fissure in the sandstone rocks of Petra

The Monastery, Petra's largest monument, dates to 100 BC



suddenly noise and activity. Bedouin guides, their eyes lined with kohl, hawk donkey rides and silver bracelets, young kids offer postcards, and grumpy camels bellow their general dissatisfaction. Above them, the 43m-high Treasury, carved deep into the rock and sealed to visitors, continues to hold on to its secrets. Even its name is misleading – it served as a grandiose tomb, built for the city's most important residents, not to hold expensive goods. Not that everyone believed this. An urn perched on the top of the building is pocked with bullet holes; a souvenir left by the gung-ho gold-diggers who tried to shoot it to pieces in the belief it contained more conventional treasures.

Further into the city, and away from the crowds who remain at the Treasury, Petra reveals itself bit by bit. Canyons open up on a street of elaborate tombs carved into the hills; further along, a theatre built by the Nabateans but added to by the Romans who annexed the city around 100 AD; beyond that, a colonnaded street that led to baths and a market place. On and on it

goes, an archaeological wonder at every turn. Dotted throughout, rather shy among the shouty statements of civic life, are the caves that acted as Nabatean homes, and in which local Bedouins still lived until the 1980s.

At his cousin's jewellery stall, Abdullah Al Faqir pours cups of tea for the visitors who have plodded up the 800 worn stone steps to Petra's second legendary tomb, the Monastery – as gobsmacking as the Treasury, and even bigger. His family lived in Petra until they were moved to a purpose-built town on the city's edge. 'There we have apartments, electricity, schools,' he says, 'but I prefer it here. This is my university. Where else is there so much beauty in the day, and so much peace at night?' Anyone who ever visited Petra, from Burckhardt to those gun-toting treasure seekers, would surely agree.

You'll be in full explorer mode after Petra, so hop back in the car and continue south along Route 15 for 70 miles until you reach the Wadi Rum Visitor Centre, where desert adventures await. 

Essentials



 **Mövenpick Resort Petra** The Mövenpick is a stone's throw from the entrance at Petra, and you'll be eternally grateful for that after a long, hot day clambering about the city. The social spaces are the most exciting thing about the hotel, with the foyer, tea room and bar kitted out in traditional Arabic style; bedrooms are rather more functional. There's a lovely roof terrace on the fourth floor for a post-Petra recovery beer (from US\$162.38; moevenpick-hotels.com).

 **Petra** Entrance fee US\$65.95; 'Petra at Night' tours Mon, Wed & Thur, additional US\$15.35 (visitpetra.jo).

3. Wadi Rum

It's time to practise your best explorer pose – continue to the desert to camel-trek by day and camp under starlit skies by night

MAHMOUD ZAWEIDEH yanks his jeep around another red dune. 'I've been driving since I was seven years old,' he yells above the Arabic pop on the radio, laughing as his passengers tumble about on the back seat. 'And I first rode a camel at five.'

Mahmoud has lived in Wadi Rum all his life, working as a guide to those who come to the desert seeking their own Lawrence of Arabia experience. 'There are 270 square miles here, and I know every one,' he says,

Guide Mahmoud Zaweideh stands at the natural rock bridge of Jebel Kharaz, 34m across and formed of white sandstone





leaving the jeep to clamber up the natural sandstone arch of Jebel Kharaz, his red-and-white headscarf flapping behind him in the wind. Before him, craggy granite mountains tower up from the scrubby floor, strange shapes appearing in their weathered rock: a face in profile, a crouching monster, an elephant. Little eddies of whipped sand zip across the desert floor in the distance.

Mahmoud is a member of the al-Howaitat Bedouin tribe believed by some to descend from the Nabateans who crossed these deserts in huge camel trains more than 2,000 years ago, carrying spices, ivory,

frankincense and myrrh. They left their distant relatives plenty of reminders of their existence: throughout Wadi Rum, camels, ostriches and ibex are chiselled into the sandstone, indicating the direction the traders were heading, and how good the hunting was. A newer addition to the rock art can be found in the shady gully of Barrah Siq: the carved head of Lawrence of Arabia, whose desert exploits are recounted in the book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (and the equally epic film named after him and shot in Wadi Rum in the early 1960s).

The apparent romance of those ancient

caravans, beasts plodding across the dunes loaded with exotic goods, draws many visitors to join a camel trek through the desert today. Getting to their feet in a series of lunges and jerks, with riders wedged in their saddles, the animals set off at a slow, steady pace, pausing only to nibble on a patch of wild grass or a companion's hind leg. The vast scale of Wadi Rum is brought down to a more human level when seen from their gently rocking backs.

The illusion is soon lost at sunset, when small groups of tourists gather on the mountains to watch the desert turn red. A



Wadi Rum is the largest wadi (valley) in Jordan. **RIGHT FROM TOP** Camels remain an intrinsic part of Bedouin life; guide Mahmoud Zawieideh; the precariously perched Mushroom Rock



Essentials

kestrel hovers on the wind, oblivious to the excited shouts of the crowds. Mahmoud lies against a rock, watching a jeep shoot across the valley floor far below, a trail of dust billowing behind it. 'I will never leave,' he says, as a full moon rises into a darkening sky speckled with stars. 'Mahmoud is like the fish – if it is out of the water, it dies. If Mahmoud goes out of the desert, he dies.'

After the empty landscapes of the desert, it's time to head back north and leap into city life. Take the Desert Highway 200 miles to Amman, keeping an eye out for camel warning signs as you go. 

Captain's Desert Camp Guests choose from a range of options at this camp on the edge of Diseh village, from basic tents to en suite rooms with aircon, radiating from an outdoor social and dining area, candlelit at night. For a full Arabian Nights experience, opt for its small private camp, set up in a remote part of the desert (right). A chef is on hand to cook Arabic meals, best enjoyed round the fire under a star-filled sky (private camp from US\$207; double room in main camp on half-board basis US\$107.35; captains-jo.com). The camp also arranges desert activities, including 4x4 trips (around US\$92) and camel treks (from US\$15.35 per hour).





Maria Haddad and Um Reen at Beit Sitti. RIGHT Amman's markets are famed for their herbs and spices



fresh lemonade and tabbouleh.

As a call to prayer from the mosque rises over the rooftops, Maria lays the table among the wild fig and mandarin trees on the terrace, and dishes up plates of fattet magdoos, a sort of Arabic lasagne made with aubergine, pine nuts, tomato and yoghurt. With her is Um Reen, an Iraqi lady who wandered past Beit Sitti one day, stopped to chat about food and has been helping out ever since. 'When we were young, we used to come here to cook with my grandmother,' says Maria. 'We wanted to keep the house open when she died, and teach guests the dishes she made with us. In our culture, it's important to be hospitable. That is what we show here.' And with that, she makes a toast to new friends, and sits down to eat.

From Amman it's a short day trip to Jerash to attempt to walk off some of that indulgence. Drive north along Route 35 for 25 miles, and return the same day. 

Essentials



Le Royal It's all about the views. Bedrooms are comfortable if a little generic – the main draw is that they all face out, with the city skyline a lovely distraction beyond the window. There are numerous bars and restaurants; the best place to watch the sunset is from the terrace of the 10th-floor bar (from US\$237.65; leroyalamman.com).

Beit Sitti Morning, lunch and dinner cooking courses; prices vary depending on group size (from US\$38.35 for five people; beitsitijo.com).

Zumot Winery Email to arrange a tasting at the shop (bottle from US\$15.35; zumot-wines.com).

4. Amman

Jordanian hospitality revolves around food – discover the best of it with market visits, wine tasting and a cookery course in the capital city

IN A SHOP ON A DUSTY STREET in central Amman, Khaled Zumot uncorks another bottle of the Saint George wine his family has been making since 1954. At tastings in the Zumot wineshop, most visitors are surprised to learn that Jordan produces wine at all – let alone such good wine – yet the country has a tradition of viniculture that dates back to biblical times. The shelves are stacked with every variety possible: merlot, shiraz, pinot noir, chenin blanc, sauvignon gris, tocai – many bearing the rosette of an international award winner, and all made locally. The hills that bobble out north of the city are dotted with vineyards and every roadside stall among them seems to sell grapes out of polystyrene boxes. They're loaded onto rickety old trucks that make their way to Amman's produce markets, joining others heaving with watermelons, pomegranates, plums and tomatoes.

It's close to lunch at the vegetable market and the aisles are filled with customers prodding at prickly pears and stopping to smell bunches of fresh dill, basil and parsley. Young boys twist in and out of the throng carrying trays of mint tea above their heads, and stall holders weigh out blue figs, peaches and shiny fat aubergines, cigarettes dangling from their mouths, or offer advice on the best way to cook their

produce ('Lamb's testicles: lovely grilled with a bit of oil'). A couple of streets down, past shops selling dried hibiscus, mint, marjoram and cinnamon out of striped sacks, the sugar market is doing a fine trade in hazelnuts and pistachios, used in the traditional Arabic pastries so sweet they make the teeth tingle.

With such a bounty of produce on its doorstep, and at something of a culinary crossroads in the Middle East, India on one side and the Mediterranean on the other, it's no surprise that Jordan takes its food so seriously. At lunchtime, at every restaurant across the country, groups crowd round plates of mezze, scooping up tahini and hummus with warm bread – the first course in a meal that often lasts for hours.

'Jordanian culture is inherently based around food, because our meals are directly related to spending time with family,' explains Maria Haddad, chopping parsley on the shady roof terrace of her house in Jabal al-Weibdeh, one of Amman's oldest districts. 'The best way for a Jordanian mother to show love is by how much she feeds her kids.' Maria's personal mission is to share that love with visitors to her country by running cooking courses at Beit Sitti ('House of My Grandmother'), teaching them Jordanian customs, as well as the best way to make Arabic flat bread,

5. Jerash

The final step of your trip takes you to the city of Jerash, the region's best preserved Roman city, for ancient monuments and a few surprises

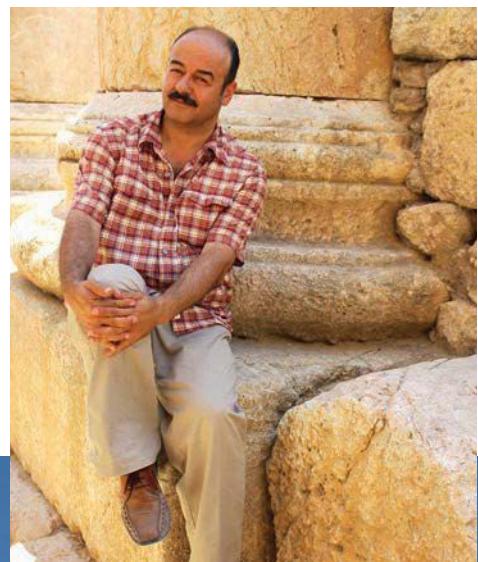
NOON IN THE TOWN OF Jerash and most people have long since retreated from the sun. They rest in the shade with cups of thick coffee, barely mustering the energy to chat. One guy squats under an umbrella and makes a go of selling sun hats, giving his sales patter in a monotonous tone. Carried in on the breeze is a familiar but distinctly alien sound: the bagpipe wheezing of *Auld Lang Syne*.

Hapis-Ali-Hamdan is retired from the music department of the Jordanian Army. He now plays the pipes to demonstrate the excellent acoustics of the South Theatre in Jerash. The town, nearly 2,000 years old, is one of the Middle East's best preserved and most important Roman sites, complete with colonnaded streets, towering temples, and

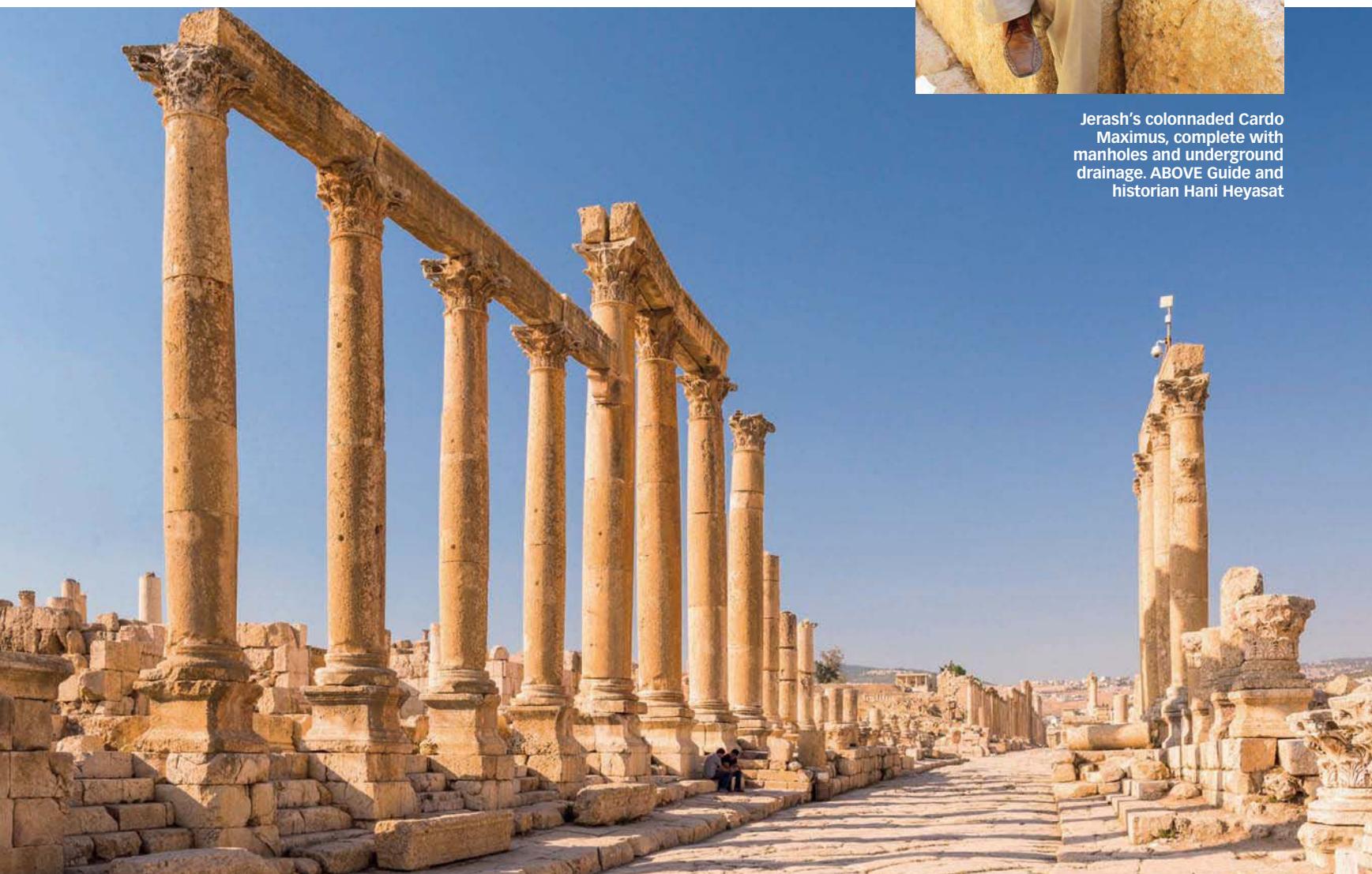
a hippodrome where chariot races are still staged. Hapis greets his old friend, historian and guide Hani Heyasat, with a quick blast of *Scotland the Brave*. 'You know the pipes originally came from Mesopotamia,' says Hani, a roguish twinkle in his eye. 'You go home and tell your Scottish friends they play an instrument from Iraq.'

That Jerash exists at all is something of an archaeological miracle. It was lost to the world after a series of earthquakes, and only rediscovered in 1806. Excavation continues and parts of the site have the feel of a Roman salvage yard: piles of leaf-decorated capitals here, a stack of worn architraves there. The tops of columns poke out of the ground, hinting at the treasures that lie beneath. Yet it is remarkably easy to imagine the town in its heyday. Chariot wheels have left deep

grooves in the Cardo Maximus, the main street, where Jerash's inhabitants would have come to gossip and do their shopping; the carving of a cow can be made out in the ruins of the agora, marking the butcher's; and the forum, where boys now sell water, is much as it was when locals gathered to hear the latest news from Rome. Hani sits on one of the stone benches of the hippodrome, recalling the days when 14,000 people gathered here to watch sports. 'Now we have football stadiums to keep people quiet,' he says. 'Nothing has changed in 2,000 years.' LP



Jerash's colonnaded Cardo Maximus, complete with manholes and underground drainage. ABOVE Guide and historian Hani Heyasat





Daintree Rainforest –
the oldest surviving
rainforest in the world

FULL FRONTAL

Experiencing the best of Queensland comes with a healthy dose of adrenaline as I found out in my jaunt to Cairns before heading up North Queensland to take in world-famous UNESCO Heritage Sites. Take the plunge with me as we enter the depths of the region's bejewelled waters and lush rainforests

WORDS ESTHER FAITH LEW • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF QUEENSLAND TOURISM





The gigantic Napoleon Maori Wrasse breeds slowly and are currently declining in numbers **RIGHT** A hawksbill turtle



No one experiences Queensland in half measures; if you have been enlightened, that is. It's not just about the sun, sand and surf. That would be scratching the surface of this bounteous region that boasts a landscape of epiphanic proportions. When it comes to world firsts and even setting Guinness World Records, Queensland has the vim and vigour to take it to new heights, not forgetting its natural iconic landmarks and world heritage sites that etch unforgettable memories into the minds of most who walk through its lands.

Queensland is the only place on earth where two UNESCO World Heritage Sites meet – the rainforests of the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef. The Wet Tropics includes Cooktown to Townsville, which covers about 900,000ha in Daintree, Barron Gorge and Wooreenooran national parks. And Great Barrier Reef – which needs no introduction – has the world's largest coral reef system, with 2,600km of 3,000 reefs and 900 islands. There are 19 World Heritage Sites in Australia, and Queensland has five of them: the others being Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island; the Gondwana Rainforests which cover Lamington, Springbrook, Main Range and Mt Barney national parks; and the Riversleigh Fossil Mammal Site in Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park. From rainforest to reef and limestone to sand, Queensland, including Tropical North Queensland, showcase the

settings for natural spectacles at its most impressive.

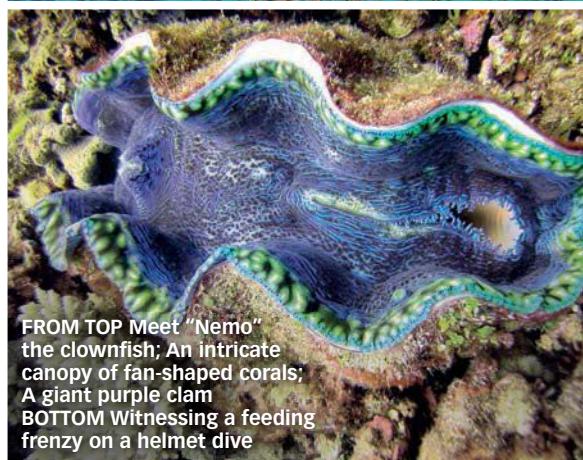
When it comes to Guinness World Records, there are fun entries such as the World's Biggest Orchestra of 7,224 musicians in Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium in 2013; and then there are serious ones like the Longest-running Pitch Drop Experiment initiated by University of Queensland's physics Professor Thomas Parnell in 1927. But, going back to nature, The Australian Book of Records has even an entry for "Biggest Orgasm in the Universe" in Great Barrier Reef. This is a term that is used to describe the annual coral spawning in November or December, which is a spectacle in itself, where zillions of brightly coloured sperm and eggs are released over three to five nights.

WATERS RUN DEEP

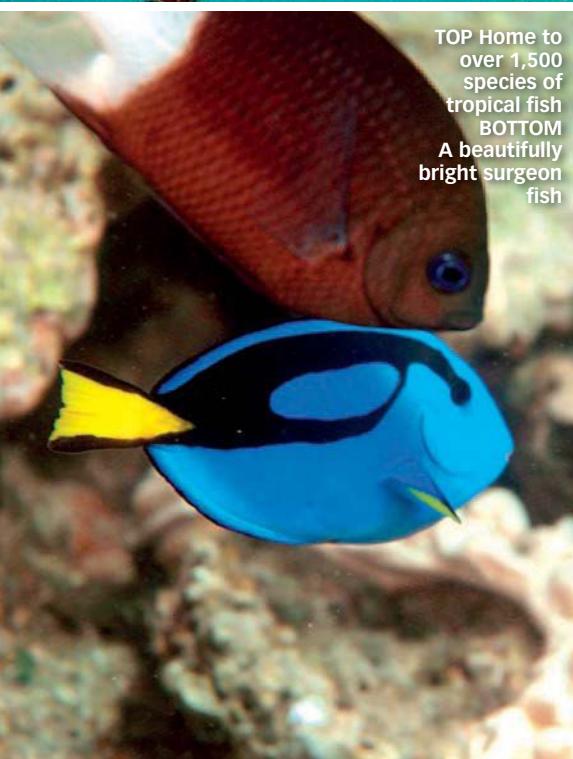
While I did not begin my journey with a big bang, I most certainly came up close and personal with a huge personality in the Great Barrier Reef. Meet Wally – the friendly Napoleon Maori Wrasse, one of the largest reef fish in the world. It spans up to 2m for the males, and they are easily distinguished by their Mick Jagger-like lips, a huge hump and dog-like demeanour in wanting attention. I had the chance to pat one when I explored the reef in a helmet dive. Those eyes – you will not forget them. They seemed to speak of beauty found in the depths of the ocean. When you see one, do remember to thank them for preserving the Great Barrier

Reef; they feed on toxic animals that destroy the reef.

For encounters of the non-mammal and non-aquatic kind, head to the Gold Coast; you may be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of Captain Jack Sparrow. Johnny Depp is currently filming *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*. That will have to wait. I headed to Cairns Reef Fleet Terminal to board a motor catamaran. I was looking forward to spending a splendid day out on the reef, courtesy of Reef Magic Cruises (1 Spence Street, Cairns; tel: +61 7 4031 1588). We headed out to the Marine World platform where one may choose to snorkel in the coral lagoon, explore the depths in a semi-submersible and glass-bottom boat, go on a helmet dive or just simply scuba dive. In my helmet dive, our guide set the scene for a feeding frenzy with some tempting bait, and the fish did come swarming, in a dizzying array of colours, shapes and sizes. And among them all, swimming at a leisurely pace was Wally, who checked us out by flanking us left and then right, looking coyly at us with its gentle gaze before nudging our hands for some treats. Experienced scuba divers may head to the dedicated dive tender reserved for certified divers. The on-board marine naturalist led a snorkel safari that was fun and educational. After drying off, I went to the helipad for a Vertical Magic Heli Adventure to gain another perspective of the reef. We climbed to 3,000 ft and enjoyed the panorama of cays, islands and crystal-blue waters.



FROM TOP Meet 'Nemo'
the clownfish; An intricate
canopy of fan-shaped corals;
A giant purple clam
BOTTOM Witnessing a feeding
frenzy on a helmet dive



TOP Home to
over 1,500
species of
tropical fish
BOTTOM
A beautifully
bright surgeon
fish





Enjoy the rainforest or take a swim in Mossman River
RIGHT FROM TOP A cultural ceremony using a didgeridoo; Harold Tayley from the Kuku Yalanji tribe introducing the history of the land in a Dreamtime Walk; Mossman Gorge Centre; A smoking ceremony before the commencement of walks to ward off bad spirits

OPPOSITE
A traditional damper of refreshments; Stand-up paddling for the adventurous



TALES OF THE FOREST

From diving underwater to taking to the skies, my next adventure took me deep into the depths of the rainforest in Mossman and Surrounds, where an eye-opening indigenous experience awaited. This North Queensland town is located at the southern part of the Daintree River leading to Daintree National Park, nestled at the foot of steep rainforest-mountains and coddled by sprawling sugar cane fields. We were in rainforest aboriginal country, a place where the story of the land is revered and celebrated in traditions and rituals upheld by tribes who continue to protect the "story places" in the rainforest. These "story places" are what we would describe as mountains, rivers, waterfalls and trees, and to the aborigines, these places take on sacred meanings and significance that tell the tale of "The Dreaming", an era where ancestral totemic spirit beings formed "The Creation".

It was with such reverie in thought that I arrived at the Mossman Gorge Centre (212 Mossman Gorge Rd, Mossman Gorge; tel: +617 4099 7000), an eco-tourism development that has been pivotal in ensuring indigenous employment and spearheading training and tourism. The aboriginal tribe occupying the land dating back 50,000 years are the Kuku Yalanji; they possess a deep knowledge of the land that has been passed down through the generations, and they share this knowledge in their colourful narratives as they lead visitors on mesmerising Dreamtime Walks through the rainforest. Our walk was led by Harold Tayley, whom we called "Mooks" (Yalanji for "elder"). He began with a traditional smoking ceremony for cleansing and to ward off bad spirits. With

instructions to tread carefully, we began our walk and immersed ourselves in the lush wonders of the rainforest, accompanied by Mooks' engaging explanations of food and pharmaceutical products derived from tropical plants. The rainforest provides amply, and we learnt a lot about bush food and survival techniques, including the natural way of cleaning with "bush soap" made from sarsaparilla.

"The rainforest is our university, our pharmacy and our supermarket, that's why we have great respect for its land," says Mooks. Mooks is highly revered by his tribe; he is also a shaman and a professional tracker whom local authorities call upon in times of need. Individuals in need of healing have gone to Mooks and he has helped them to recover from their ailments; he even has a folder containing testimonials of these accounts. "I have healed people from England, Texas, Boston, Germany, Holland; some of them came on my walks and asked me for help. A six-year-old girl from England was diagnosed with a brain tumour and I healed her; she's a teenager now. A young boy from Texas had the same problem and he is fine now," Mooks shares. When probed, Mooks said that he uses healing methods that involve herbs and natural remedies as well as a reiki-like healing technique. "I use my hands," he elaborates.

I most certainly paid full attention to Mooks during our walk. We learnt to look out for razor vines that might entangle around our feet and cause some nasty rashes, and that if we got lost, we should pick up a rock and hit it against the buttress of a tree; the resounding thud will reverberate through the rainforest, signaling a call for help. And if you ever get thirsty,

the rainforest provides with clean drinking water that is collected from the vines. A common plant to be wary of is the wait-a-while plant, which has a multitude of barbs that makes it difficult to detach yourself from it once you are caught, thus the catchy name. Watch out too for the stinging nettle; you might be enticed by its red fruit which tastes like raspberries and get stung when you reach out for it.

As we walked deeper into the rainforest, Mooks suddenly came to a stop and told us we had come to an ancestral place and he needed to invoke some prayers to pay his respects and to ensure safe passing. It seemed like any other path, but the aura around it seemed different. "How do you say thanks, Mooks?" I ask. "Yalada," he replies. "Yalada," I repeat respectfully. I was gradually comprehending the sacred relationship the Kuku Yalanji tribe has with their ancestral spirits and the rainforest. We ended our walk with a lovely damper of scones and tea.

Essentials



GETTING THERE

From Cairns, hire a car and enjoy the stunning 1hr 10min drive along the Captain Cook Highway to Mossman Gorge, which lies 77km north of Cairns. Part of the Great Tropical Drive, the highway winds along the coast of the tropical seaside rainforest, affording gorgeous scenery.

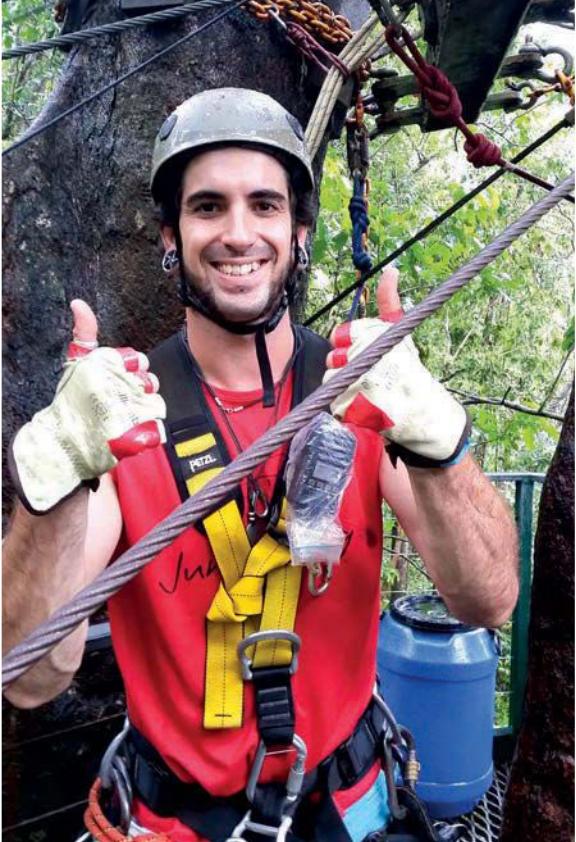
Silky Oaks Lodge (Finlayvale Road, Mossman; tel: +617 4098 1666) enjoys a spectacular location on the Mossman Gorge River and hosts luxury treehouse accommodation accompanied by award-winning dining at its restaurant. Silky Oaks is also known for its treatments at Healing Waters Spa which offers a sumptuous spa menu and a line of premium Sodashi spa products.

With a choice of Studio/Garden/Deluxe Treehouse, Riverhouses, Lodge Suites and Billabong Suites, Silky Oaks features rooms that are tropical and elegant, dressed in Rosewood and Silky Oak timbre and furnishings that create a warm and cosy ambience, all with their own private balconies to ensure guests thoroughly enjoy their rainforest surrounds.





A sweeping view of Far North Queensland Coast, the Great Barrier Reef and the rainforests
BOTTOM FROM LEFT The dynamic crew from the Jungle Surfing Tour were careful, encouraging and inspirational



WILD SPEED ACTION

So it was that we said our good-byes to Mooks in a spiritual mood and made our way to Daintree Forest where an adventure awaited us up on Cape Tribulation. It was a 1hr 15min ride from Mossman Gorge, and quite unlike any other. The journey was a highlight in itself. After passing by sugar cane fields and farming land, we arrived at the Daintree Ferry Terminal (6am to midnight; US\$16 return for cars). After the crossing, head for Cape Kimberley and Cow Bay, which takes you past lowlands and the rainforest. As you approach Cape Tribulation, you will see various tourist attractions with options to explore various walking trails. We decided to stop awhile at the Kulki-Cape Tribulation Lookout, which took us to a viewing platform on the north side of Cape Tribulation. I wanted to take in the beautiful sight of the rainforest converging with the reef. As we rode on up, there was the ocean right alongside us, a constant reminder of these iconic National Heritage Sites.

Soon, we reached Cape Tribulation's visitor information centre, also called Snake House. They don't call it that for nothing, but fortunately the snakes were in glass cases. The adventure was about to begin – we signed the necessary papers for our Jungle Surfing Tour, which would take us on a high-rise, high-adrenaline ziplining experience above the jungle canopy. Our instructors equipped us with our safety equipment and sent us along. Our helmets had names on them, and mine was Alice in Wonderland – I wonder. As long as I don't go down the rabbit hole. The crew were



For the finale: Go upside down on the Jungle Surfing Tour

dynamic and charming, and we felt absolutely safe at all times as we made our way through the various tree platforms. As we climbed up even higher slopes to reach the starting platform, the still of the rainforest was punctuated by the high-pitched screams of other zipliners obviously getting their kicks. The crew were a hip and charming bunch of young strong men who obviously loved what they were doing. They showed us how to accelerate if we wanted a more intense thrill and how to slow it down if we didn't like palpitations. Most of us forgot our fears and worries and eventually became comfortable enough on the platforms to be gazing around at our lush surrounds while waiting for our turn. The ultimate kicker was the final zipline where we ended with a high-speed zip – and hung upside down for that unforgettable photograph.

It was an amazing experience that allowed us to see the rainforest in a different way. More importantly, it was great to know that we got the most out of the

rainforest without harming it – the crew shared that they use a choking method to secure all ziplines and harness equipment; the trees are not damaged by nails or cables. We ended our session with a blast – and that spoke volumes about the intensity of a rainforest experience in Queensland, served up in different ways to make sure that we left with vivid impressions and a deep



An intricate choking system to secure cables

understanding of the complexity of these treasured National Heritage Sites. After all, the Daintree Rainforest region hosts 12 primitive flowering plant families out of 19 found in the world, making the rainforest a rich hunting ground for medicinal research and discoveries.

Essentials



Thala Beach Lodge (Private Road, Oak Beach; tel: +61 7 4098 5700) is a family-owned resort that occupies its own private nature reserve spanning 58ha and a haven of walking trails for visitors to explore, with some leading all the way to a pristine tranquil beach. Due to its exclusive location on the northernmost headland, Thala enjoys 2km of beautiful untouched coastline with breathtaking views to go with it. Imagine emerging from your jungle walk on the reserve to the sight of glittering sand and clear blue waters. The vista before you paints a pretty picture of the Far North Queensland coast from Double Island to Cape Tribulation before sweeping over to the Great Barrier Reef and to the World Heritage Forests covering the coastal ranges.

Guests have a choice of four splendid accommodations, with The Sandpiper Suite offering a premium private space that includes spectacular views of Coral Sea, perfectly positioned on the edge of the reef and the rainforest; Coral Sea Bungalows that line the upper ridges of Thala's headland for a sweeping sea view that might offer a glimpse of rare Australian snub fin dolphins or Bryde's whales; Eucalypt Bungalows that allow guests to experience up close sightings of birds and butterflies; or Jungle Bungalows that ensconce you deep in the warmth of the lush forest.



PORT OF CALL

Just an hour's drive from Cairns, Port Douglas was once a fishing village that now throbs with a quiet sophistication, luring those who wish to get away from the busy tourist scene in Cairns. On the radar as an A-lister's private getaway, this town has been visited by Matthew McConaughey, Kate Hudson, Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg who have enjoyed its gourmet offerings.

Port Douglas also enjoys the great advantage of having the Daintree National Park in its backyard, and the tourism flow has fuelled the increased number of resorts that cater to all budgets. The marina of fishing boats and yachts also offers visitors the option of scenic sailing tours such as those provided by Aquarius Sunset Sail, which takes you out to the Coral Sea on a luxurious catamaran, complete with champagne and canapés for an ideal cruise.

One of the highlights of Port Douglas is the palm-fringed Four Mile Beach, which begs to be explored, while the picturesque St Mary's by the Sea Chapel sets the scene for a lazy day, with the Sunday

market providing some leisurely distraction. Besides shopping, this quiet town has a zesty dining scene that is unbeknownst to many, with several restaurants that are creating a buzz among regular locals. One of them is Zinc (61 Macrossan Street; tel: +617 4099 6260), which serves modern Australian cuisine in a chic casual ambience. Highlights on the menu are local produce such as prawns, barrumundi and other seafood. The beer battered fresh market fish was delish and perfectly fried, complemented by crisp potato chips and a refreshing summer salad with rock melon, lemon and remoulade sauce. For a heavier dish, the blue cheese crumble crusted beef tenderloin was an umami treat that thoroughly satiated meat lovers. Asian ingredients are used creatively in the dishes, adding another dimension to the flavours of dishes such as the sesame, chilli and coriander crusted salmon fillet, served with potato and garlic puree, oyster sauce glazed bok choy, wakami and bean sprout salad, wasabi and coriander butter sauce.



FROM TOP
CLOCKWISE A vibrant dining scene awaits; Village Carnivale at Four Mile Beach; Shop at leisure along the main street at Macrossan



essentials



1 GETTING THERE

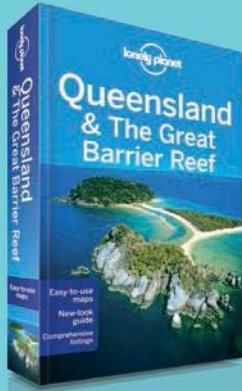
Qantas flies from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to Cairns with one stop in Brisbane, while Silkair flies direct from Singapore to Cairns three times weekly (from US\$1,103; silkair.com), which is available as well from Kuala Lumpur with a Singapore transfer.

GETTING AROUND

The Cairns Airport Bus offers transfers to Cairns CBD at US\$9.30 per ticket with regular hourly departures. Prior bookings must be made online at least 24hrs before departure date. The Sunbus public service is available as well, costing US\$1.90 for a single trip ticket to the city centre. It is better to purchase a day's pass if you are planning to explore the city before heading out. For self-drives, head to Hertz for your choice of 4WD or regular sedans.

FURTHER READING

Pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's guide on Queensland (US\$24.99) for comprehensive information. E-books are available at US\$17.99.



A THREE-DAY DAINTREE EXPLORER TRAIL IN A 4WD

DAY 1: MOSSMAN TO CAPE TRIBULATION

From Mossman, drive 6km to Mossman Gorge for a cultural tour at the centre. Then head to nearby Cooya Beach along The Bama Way, which takes you through coastal mangroves, rainforests and the hilltop savannah.

Take the 25km drive along Mossman Daintree Road to the Daintree River vehicle ferry, and head to Daintree Village for a rich programme of river cruises, guided rainforest walks, valley drives and wildlife spotting.

For great views, stop at Alexandra Range Lookout and take in the landscape of the Daintree River and offshore islands.

DAY 2: CAPE TRIBULATION TO COOKTOWN

From Cape Tribulation, take the Bloomfield Track to south of the Bloomfield River. It connects you to the road that leads you to Ayton and then on to the Mulligan Highway that leads to Cooktown.

Along the way, the Wujal Wujal Aboriginal community, Cedar Bay National Park, Black Mountain National Park and Keating's Lagoon provide opportunities for enriching discoveries. Before reaching Cooktown for the night, a recommended stop for lunch is at the Lion's Den Hotel along Shipton's Flat Road before continuing on to Black Mountain.

DAY 3: COOKTOWN TO MOSSMAN

Follow the Mulligan Highway to Lakeland Downs in Laura River Valley and explore this coffee



and banana plantation region. In less than an hour, you will reach the Palmer River Roadhouse, which holds memories of its gold mining days.

Passing by Mt Molloy, take the Rex

Range Road that leads to Mossman. You will pass by Julatten, which is popular among bird lovers who have been able to spot up to 200 of 370 species found in the Wet Tropics.



Abbey Library

Naturally Perfect

The jaw-dropping beauty of the Swiss Alps often gives the impression of vast spaces that one has to traverse to reach a good view. But this is compact Switzerland where the mountains are right on the doorstep. With the extensive network of trains and buses of the Swiss Travel System you could be whisked from city to mountain top in double-quick time, placing you right in the midst of a picture-perfect alpine moment

WORDS PAT CHONG • PHOTOGRAPHS SWITZERLAND TOURISM BOARD, ST.GALLEN-BODENSEE TOURISM, CECILIA WOO

DAY ONE

From the gateway of Zurich airport, the graceful cobble-stoned streets of pretty St Gallen are a mere hour's ride away by train. The 1,400-year-old town is compactly laid out and made for easy exploration on foot. Lined by stately old buildings in wood and stone with charming balconies and window seats, this is the quintessential Alpine town.

St Gallen is small enough to be visited easily on your own but if you prefer the company of a guided tour, there are one-hour walking tours of the old town which start from an inexpensive CHF12 (US\$18) per person.

You'll find it hard to miss Red Square or Stadtluonge, where entire streets are covered in red polymer. Hang out in a quirky yet inviting large-scale outdoor living room, replete with big seating areas and curvy lamps where rounded sculptural shapes playfully revitalise the town's public spaces.

From the hip to the spiritual, spend time contemplating life beneath the delicate lace-like details of the soaring ceilings in the St Gallen Cathedral. Light, airy and almost ethereal, the Cathedral's cool and beautiful Baroque interior is a good place for a break amidst all the walking. Nearby, the hushed halls of the famed historic Abbey Library of St Gall give a good peek into thousands of intricately and beautifully hand-painted books, all painstakingly copied by the monks and scribes of hundreds of years ago. This



St Gallen Cathedral

Samedan Town



World Heritage Site with its rich wood-panelled walls is the oldest library in Switzerland and widely considered to be among the most beautiful monastic libraries in the world.

Fashion fans make a beeline for the Textile Museum. The famed St Gallen lace, much sought after by fashion houses in Europe, is on display here, as are many interesting and colourful fashion collections.

A short scenic train ride from St Gallen brings you to Rorschach and the Forum Wurth with its collection of world-class modern art with seasonal collections such as famed sculptor Botero's cheeky collection of Botera Sutra. But with beautiful Lake Constance nearby, the main attraction would be the serene lakeside strolls, a reminder that in Switzerland, one is never far from a postcard-worthy view.

DAY TWO

Switzerland's world-renowned beauty lies in the rolling foothills and soaring snow-capped mountains that circle the country. A good introduction starts with the train ride to Samedan. A quiet village nestled amidst meadows and pastures, Samedan offers a serene Swiss village experience. No five-star sights but a comfortable (and less expensive) stay in a charming small village one stop away from the ritzy resort town of St Moritz.

Well-known as the glamorous winter playground of the rich, famous and royal, St Moritz comes with a cosmopolitan

sheen that oozes a sense of wealthy privilege. Here, the air seems a tad more rarified and not just because of the altitude. Lined with boutiques and shops boasting the best designer brands, St Moritz's sophisticated appeal lies in shopping and people-watching, or a throw or two of the dice at the roulette table in St Moritz's swanky casino where you rub shoulders with the chi-chi set.

St Moritz's altitude means cool summer hikes into the highlands or some of the best snow action this side of the Swiss Alps. As late as the last week of April, the air remains chilly with the occasional snowfall and the frozen lake mirrors the mountains flanking it, adding a brooding sense of drama to the beauty of the panorama.



Lake St. Moritz



Lake Lugano

DAY THREE

Chugging over bridges and tall stone viaducts with rocky rivers far below, the little red train with the modern, generous panoramic windows connects the dots in southern Switzerland, bringing travellers from the alpine landscape of Switzerland to the warm and balmy Italian lakes. The Bernina Express ranks among one of Switzerland's most iconic and scenic rides as it carries passengers from the alps to the Italian border.

As they say, it is not the destination but the journey that counts. In the case of the Bernina Express, this train journey is even classified as a World Heritage Site in itself.

If you can tear yourself away from the jaw-dropping beauty of the scenery, take a minute to appreciate the sheer engineering feat it took to carve out tracks, build bridges and tunnels in geographically challenging terrain. Look out for the cute Brusio circular viaduct as the train corkscrews in a circle to move from a higher altitude to a lower one.

Skimming past turquoise blue alpine lakes, the rocky slopes of mountains that shoot skywards, snow-capped peaks in the distance, and the occasional neat hamlet, the train ride is every travel photographer's dream with snap-worthy panorama at every turn.

It takes roughly two hours to travel from



The Bernina Express

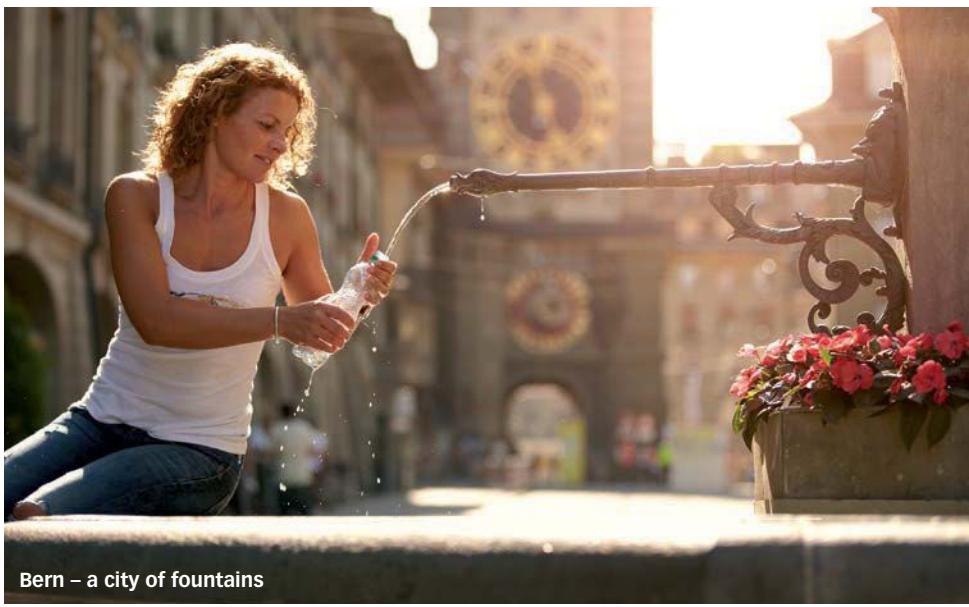


Tirano Town

St Moritz to Tirano, the terminus station – just in time for lunch in Italy! Tirano is best known as a pilgrimage town. Sited just across the border from Switzerland, it is a convenient transit point for travellers between the two countries. From here, there are easy train connections deeper into Italy.

Bern's old medieval streets, with the Clock Tower in the background





Bern – a city of fountains

From Tirano, it is easy to hop onto a bus back into Switzerland headed for the lakeside town of Lugano. Lugano has a history longer than many cities in Europe, having been inhabited since the Stone Age. Lugano combines the beauty of Switzerland with the laidback vibes of Italy. The lakeside is lined by sturdy and leafy sycamore trees and cherry trees, a spectacular sight in spring when the cherry blossoms burst into clouds of pink and white. But in any season, sunset strolls on the lakeside promenade are a great way to close the day.

Shopaholics will love Lugano's elegant streets where the best Italian and European labels are represented. Or get a taxi for the

half-hour journey to Fox Town, a factory discount outlet that offers the same designer labels at lower prices. Lugano also has its own casino for those who cannot resist the lure of the dice.

DAY FOUR

It's never easy to say goodbye to Switzerland but warm Swiss hospitality takes care of all the discreet touches that take the pain out of goodbyes. For one, it is possible to leave your luggage with the hotel to be forwarded to the airport while you take the leisurely route – to sightsee hands-free!

Coming down from the mountains, the last stop is the elegant old city of Bern before heading for Zurich airport. Bern's old medieval streets are a World Heritage Site and well worth a leisurely meander. Bern also boasts the famous bears after which the city is named, and the former residence of Albert Einstein. Science buffs will lap up the fact that this is where the Theory of Relativity first developed, in the small apartment Einstein called home. Don't miss the famous Clock Tower or Zytglogge. It's been keeping time for the Swiss since 1530! Now that's Swiss clockwork efficiency for you!

Bern is a city of fountains. With more than 100 public fountains, many of which have been around for more than 500 years, the soothing tinkle of running water is part of the Bernese soundscape.

A must-see on the itinerary of art fans is the new Zentrum Paul Klee which houses the world's largest collection of work by Klee and Kandinsky. Non-art fans should also make a stop to see the soaring glass and curved steel of the museum, in itself an art form designed by leading Italian architect Renzo Piano. 



Essentials



GETTING THERE

Get a headstart on Swiss hospitality on board Swissair. Swissair flies direct from Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to Zurich daily.

GETTING AROUND

Swiss Travel System has a range of travel passes that covers trains, bus and boat travel across Switzerland. Swiss trains will bring you deep into the mountains via some of the best scenic train routes in the world such as the Bernina Express used in this trip. The pass also offers discounts at certain museums, as well as 50% discounts on most mountain railways. Prices for passes range from CHF120 to CHF203.

CLIMATE

Switzerland enjoys a mild temperate climate with four distinct seasons, each with its own distinctive beauty. Best times to go are in late May to September when Switzerland is at its greenest or deep in winter from Dec to March for the best ski experiences.

CURRENCY

CHF1.00 = MYR3.84
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MAKE IT HAPPEN

Apple Holiday offers a popular 10-day Switzerland & the Romantic Road package that's available during all seasons as well as a 11-day Switzerland & Bavaria tour in winter. For more information, log on to www.appleholiday.com

 For one of the best luxury mountain experiences you can have up in the Art Furrer Hotels alps, hole up in the Art Furrer Hotels in Riederalp. This is the only 5-star hotel in this region, and with lavish mountain views from most rooms. artfurrer.ch/en



Aravalli Hills

REGALED BY RAJASTHAN

Be inspired by nature as you explore the unspoilt terrain of this majestic state

WORDS LINDSAY YAP

Located in Northern India, the state of Rajasthan has much to offer to the adventurous and curious traveller. With a longstanding history extending as far back as 1000BC, Rajasthan underwent countless years of fighting and rivalry among its kingdoms, eventually becoming an independent state in 1956. This charming land has many treasures waiting to be uncovered, promising an eye-opening journey for all who explore its grounds.

Celebrated for its grand architecture, Rajasthan proudly showcases ancient fortresses, majestic palaces and lavish mansions which display its elaborate historical past. As you walk down the streets of Rajasthan, go back in time to the

era of kings and princes, feasting your eyes on the picturesque sight of elegant buildings, intricately-carved pillars and sprawling courtyards. The region's deep-rooted traditions and culture are still evident today and reflected in its historical monuments and buildings.

Besides being well-known for its rich heritage and magnificent architecture, Rajasthan is also home to abundant wildlife and impressive natural landscapes. A visit to this unassuming Indian state will leave you breathless at its luxuriant forests, glistening deserts and majestic mountain ranges. It features geographical wonders, including the famous Thar Desert and the extensive Aravalli Range.

If you are looking for a less tourist-swarmed and exclusive desert experience, seek some solitude at the Khuri sand dunes which is located about 40km southwest of Jaisalmer, an old desert city in west Rajasthan. From there, hop on a bus or taxi to Khuri. Be in awe at Khuri's dazzling golden dunes and ride on elaborately adorned camels, creating once-in-a-lifetime memories. When the sun goes down, unwind by the bonfire and enjoy traditional folk dances and tunes. Be sure to taste some authentic Rajasthan cuisine beneath the stars and complete your desert experience by staying the night in a hut built from mud and straw. Don't forget to visit the local bazaar in the village and soak in the culturally-rich atmosphere that Khuri has



Thar Desert

to offer. You will be drawn by the locals' warm hospitality and will be assured of a comfortable and meaningful stay.

Hailed as one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world, the Aravalli range is definitely deserving of a visit. Take a hike through its lush deciduous forests and rolling hills, discovering rare flora and fauna including birds like the spoonbill and osprey. Alternatively, take this unforgettable journey on horse-back, visiting villages and participating in local cultural practices. Take time to enjoy the serenity of the mountains, relishing the fresh air and observing wildlife in their natural habitat.

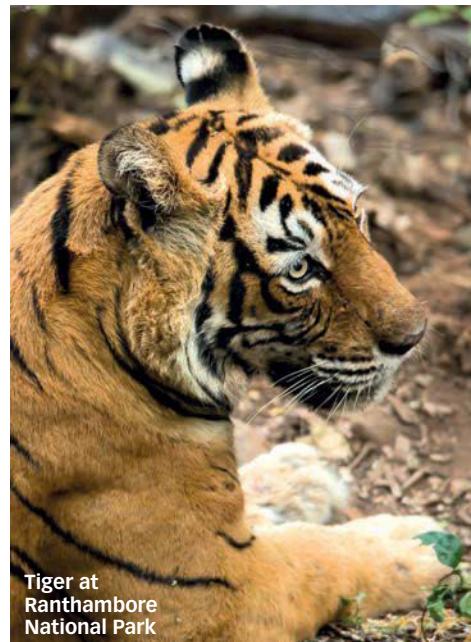
Escape from bustling city life and come up close with nature in Rajasthan's numerous wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. Located in 5km west of Udaipur, the "Venice of the East", lies Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary. It surrounds the Sajjangarh palace which overlooks the charming city of Udaipur. This reserve has abundant wildlife, including the chital, sambar deer and blue bull. Another popular wildlife sanctuary would be the Tal Chhatar Sanctuary, located in the Churu district, 210km away from Jaipur by road. It features open grassland and is home to a huge population of blackbucks, a species of antelope native to the Indian continent. Throughout the year, the sanctuary also readily welcomes birds from near and far such as the imperial eagle, sparrow hawk, ring dove and Kurja crane. Offering visitors up-close views of an impressive diversity of birds, it is the perfect getaway for the bird-watching enthusiast. Bird lovers will also enjoy a trip to Keoladeo National Park which is visited yearly by masses of both land and aquatic migratory birds including babblers, spoonbills and Sarus cranes. Hire a rickshaw or a boat to tour the vicinity and take time to enjoy the beautiful scenery of grasslands, forests and swamps.

Established as a national park in 1979, the Sariska National Park is 107km away from the capital city of Jaipur. It hosts numerous carnivores including the striped hyena, golden jackal and Bengal tiger. Home to a

PHOTOGRAPH: HONZA SOUKUP, CHRISTOPHER KRAY, PICOFAB

large population of Rhesus monkeys and a variety of avian species, visitors may also catch a glimpse of other animals such as the four-horned antelope and Hanuman langur, a species of monkey. Wildlife enthusiasts will also enjoy the popular Ranthambore National Park which is located in Sawai Madhopur, about 130km away from Jaipur. Famous for its tigers, this World Heritage site also boasts a multitude of other wildlife including Indian flying foxes, chinkaras and macaques as well as snub-nosed marsh crocodiles and Ganges soft shelled turtles.

The countless animal and avian species as well as gorgeous physical landscapes are Rajasthan's pride and joy. This stunning nature haven has many exciting possibilities and it is up to us to discover them. **LP**



Tiger at Ranthambore National Park



Deer at Ranthambore National Park

Essentials

GETTING THERE

You can fly into Rajasthan's regional airports. From Singapore to Rajasthan's capital Jaipur, travel via Air India or Jet Airways with 1 layover (from US\$609; www.airindia.in). These two airlines also fly to Udaipur and Jodhpur with a maximum of 2 stops. Alternatively, fly Jet Airways from Kuala Lumpur with 1 stop in between (from US\$520.50; www.jetairways.com). Jet Airways also flies to Udaipur with 1 layover as well as to Jodhpur with 2 stops.

GETTING AROUND

Within the cities, ride on auto rickshaws, scooters or taxis. If you want to venture out to surrounding national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, you can hire a taxi or a private SUV. Alternatively, hop on the buses that span the areas between cities and their outskirts. Train services as well as numerous flights are also available between regional cities and to major cities outside Rajasthan including Delhi and Mumbai.

WHERE TO STAY

- The Mama's Resort and Camp offers lavish accommodation at the Khuri sand dunes. It features modern amenities including luxurious tents and attached bathrooms with hot water (www.themamasjaisalmer.com; from US\$86.20).
- Boasting traditional architecture and beautifully designed interiors, the Royal Retreat Resort and Spa is just 3km away from the Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary. Indulge in therapeutic spa treatments or ride across the countryside on horseback (www.royalretreatudaipur.in; from US\$78.35 per pax).
- Located on the edge of Sariska National Park, the Sariska Palace hotel features a sprawling courtyard and restaurants serving delectable cuisines. It offers a range of room types, from standard rooms to luxurious suites with quality amenities (www.thesariskapalace.in; from US\$131.55).



ILLUSTRIOUS ISLANDS

Blessed with an abundance of sunny islands, a pristine coastline and gleaming waters with colourful coral reefs, Philippines is the one-stop destination to recharge, rejuvenate and revitalise

WORDS JOSMIN ONG

Cebu

Even though it is commonly known as the second capital of the country, Cebu City is the first Spanish settlement within the Philippines and houses some of the most iconic heritage spots in the country. As one of the busiest sea ports in the region, it enables the nation's economy to grow rapidly. A good mix of urban vibes with attractions such as shopping malls and casinos alongside cultural buildings such as the Basilica del Santo Niño enables travellers to explore the best of both worlds in this beautiful city. For tropical island seekers, look no further than Cebu and Mactan Island where some of the finest resorts and world famous dive sites are found.

BEST FOR FAMILY ESCAPES

Shangri-La's Mactan Resort & Spa

📍 Punta Engano Road, Lapu-Lapu; tel: +63 32 231 0288

Pamper your family with this lush garden retreat within a tropical paradise in Shangri-La, where activities chalk up countless hours of fun under the sun. With the marina sanctuary a stone's throw away from the luxury of your room, scheduled activities are available every day of the week to provide constant entertainment.

Head over to the health club for a 30-minutes circuit training or get in touch with the local culture through music and dance as the Buko Bar transforms into a town fiesta at night. Or head to the ocean pavilion situated at the edge of the beachfront, which seats up to 70 pax, making it a perfect spot for a social or intimate family celebration.

TOP DRAW: As a family-friendly resort, numerous services and facilities are created just to cater to children. An adventure zone featuring a three-storey indoor playground within the resort creates the ideal venue for children to spend their time under the supervision of well trained staff. Parents can head off to CHI, The Spa for their therapies without having to worry about the children. An entertainment hub, a children's pool slide and Aquaplay as well as a themed mini-golf park also provide opportunities for quality family time.

NEARBY: Take a guided tour around the Lapu Lapu area to discover the rich colonial history of Cebu or enjoy a day out at sea on cruises and diving tours to nearby islands.

PRICE: From US\$249 per night





BEST FOR PERFORMANCE ENHANCERS

Kandaya Resort

**i Agujo, Daanbantayan;
tel: +63 32 260 6006**

Being an emerging luxury destination, Kandaya offers intimate and personalised services to cater to a discerning crowd seeking rest and relaxation. Balance the body, mind and spirit with DAYA Spa treatments; try the Daya signature massage and be whisked away to the land of dreams as the skilful masseuse soothes tired muscles with the aid of healing oils and essences.

Relish in wholesome and nutritious meals at the resort's signature KUSINA restaurant while enjoying the panoramic view of the sea. Pop by The Garden's to find an array of organic home-grown vegetables, herbs and spices – all of which are essential to creating the dishes served within the restaurant. With a choice of 22 villas and 18 contemporary-style guestrooms and suites, Kandaya promises an invigorating stay emphasising friendly hospitality and a good dosage of fun and health.

TOP DRAW: In-house Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) Centre with private instructors and recovery drinks to attract the pro-active fitness crowd alongside other amenities such as a fully equipped gym, a full-size tennis court, a multi-functional sports court, a swimming pool and a yoga and meditation studio. Water sports lovers can look forward to scuba diving (just 30 minutes away from the resort), snorkelling, kayaking and even banana boat rides. In an effort to conserve the environment, Kandaya Resort believes that it is better to minimise motorised watersports equipment. Have fun while being environmentally friendly – now that's a responsible traveller.

NEARBY: Island hopping is popular as the resort is located in an ideal position. Sunset cruises and dolphin watching packages are also available for a romantic getaway.

PRICE: From US\$241 per night

BEST FOR HONEYMOONERS

Abaca boutique resort + restaurant

**i Punta Engano Road, Mactan Island
Lapu Lapu city; tel: +63 32 495 3461**

A contemporary Asian-themed resort, Abaca aims to showcase local talent and designers to guests through the unique stone architecture, copper lighting and antique pieces.

With only nine guestrooms within the resort, of which six are deluxe suites and three are villas, guests can be assured of a private getaway and experience relaxation at its finest. Enjoy a romantic dinner of Mediterranean-influenced Californian cuisine, prepared by acclaimed chef Jason Hyatt in the award winning signature restaurant – Abaca Restaurant.

TOP DRAW: Indoor and outdoor spa options with a comprehensive tailor-made service just for you and your partner. These regular rituals help create calmness and serenity within oneself as you cast your worries and stress away. Spa packages are specially put together to allow guests to truly immerse in the

experience. All products used are Abaca's specially formulated recipes and blends, which makes it a truly exclusive event.

NEARBY: Private car services are available for transfers to Mactan-Cebu International Airport. It is also used as transportation for

resort guests within the island. Shopping is the way to every girl's heart, so head on down to the city centre and check out two of the best malls in Cebu – SM Mall and Ayala Mall.

PRICE: From US\$352 per night



PHOTOGRAPHS: KANDAYA RESORT, ABACA BOUTIQUE RESORT + RESTAURANT



Palawan

An island surrounded by the South China Sea and Sulu Sea, the Province of Palawan is the largest yet least populated in the country. Its beauty lies beyond the untouched natural formations of limestone, cliffs, caves, lagoons, undiscovered forest, mountains and so much more. Visit UNESCO world heritage sites - Tubbataha Reef Marine Park and Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park and be marvelled by what nature has to offer. Coron Island, situated in Northern Palawan, is another gem worth discovering. Immerse yourself in this peaceful island and uncover the mysteries of shipwreckages through diving trips – and more.

BEST FOR TRANQUILLITY SEEKERS

Huma Island Resort & Spa

Huma Island Busuanga;
tel: +63 553 0119

Nestled in a remote area of Palawan, Huma resort is only accessible via sea plane transfers or a boat ride from Coron Town, perfect for travellers who wish to enjoy a peaceful vacation without the noise from the city or the crowd from neighbouring resorts.

Retreat into your personal space with a selection of 81 luxury villas, of which 64 are built over stilts on water. Lounge indoors with the comfort of air-conditioning or just step out onto your private sun deck for a tanning session in the afternoon, coupled with a 'villa host' should you need assistance anytime of the day.

TOP DRAW: Indulge in a gastronomic experience as the resort hosts eight dining stations to offer guests international cuisines.

Enjoy an Italian meal by the sea with a stunning alfresco dining setting or take in the panoramic view of the sparkling waters atop a hill while treating your taste buds to authentic Lebanese flavours. The luxury resort also offers a glass-floored spa complex with Arabic Hammam amongst many other spa treatments. This is a first in

the Philippines and it truly is one of the world's most exotic bathing experiences.

NEARBY: Set sail for open waters and neighbouring isles or stay on the island to explore the natural splendour of its pristine beaches and protected wildlife species. Take a dive and explore the WWII Japanese shipwreck if you wish to have a little adventure.

PRICE: From US\$930 per night





BEST FOR ECO AMBASSADORS

El Nido Resorts – Pangulasian Island

i **Bacuit Bay, El Nido Palawan Island;**
tel: +632 902 5990

Pangulasian Island is one of the four resorts owned by the El Nido Resorts group and is the most lavish of the lot.

This eco-luxury resort is built on an immaculate beachfront, set against a backdrop of tropical forest, an ideal location for that picture worthy shot of your stay. Commonly named as 'Island of the Sun', guests are able to admire the stunning sunrise and sunset daily. Select your ideal private stay amongst the 42 villas available in one of the world's most luxurious small hotel experiences.

TOP DRAW: El Nido Resorts is globally recognised for its efforts in green practices and commitment to sustainable tourism, therefore activities such as snorkelling, scuba-diving, kayaking, hiking and island hopping to explore the caves, emerald lagoons and white sand beaches are fun and engaging, yet it will not disturb too much of its original nature. Feel free to request for a private meal by the beach or take pleasure in the spa and massage services provided.



NEARBY: The Cudugnon Cave is one of many island-hopping itineraries; enter the main cavern and discover what archaeologists believe is a burial site during the Neolithic period. Or get up close to a sea turtle in the deep emerald waters of the Big Lagoon, an attractive snorkelling site.

PRICE: From US\$706 per night.



PHOTOGRAPHS: EL NIDO RESORTS – PANGULASIAN ISLAND

BEST FOR NATURE LOVERS

Amanpulo

📍 **Pamalican Island, Sulu Archipelago, Palawan; tel: +632 976 5200**

Pioneering the concept of luxury resorts on private islands in Philippines, Amanpulo has been the epitome of a tropical paradise for the past two decades.

This northern hideout in Palawan is spacious and integrates well with the natural surroundings. The turquoise waters provide a handful of activities such as sailing, windsurfing, fishing, cruising, snorkelling and scuba diving. Recently refurbished, the resort's 42 casitas are redecorated and fixed with vaulted natural timber ceilings, environmentally-friendly recycled polymer roof shingles, advanced lighting schemes to save up to 25 percent on power consumption and outdoor

showers and private swimming pools for the new room category – Treetop Pool Casita.

TOP DRAW: Exclusivity to a private island of picturesque beaches. Soak in the sun and enjoy water sports activities in the Sulu Sea and its pristine coral reefs. Other than the resort, the island is untouched and you may take the complimentary buggy or bicycle out for an adventure around. Nature lovers are sure to enjoy the 5.5km nature walk where one can see various species of birds. You may even glimpse turtle sightings. To protect the endangered species of green and hawksbill turtles, staff are trained to safeguard the nesting season, ensuring that baby turtles are safely released back into the sea.

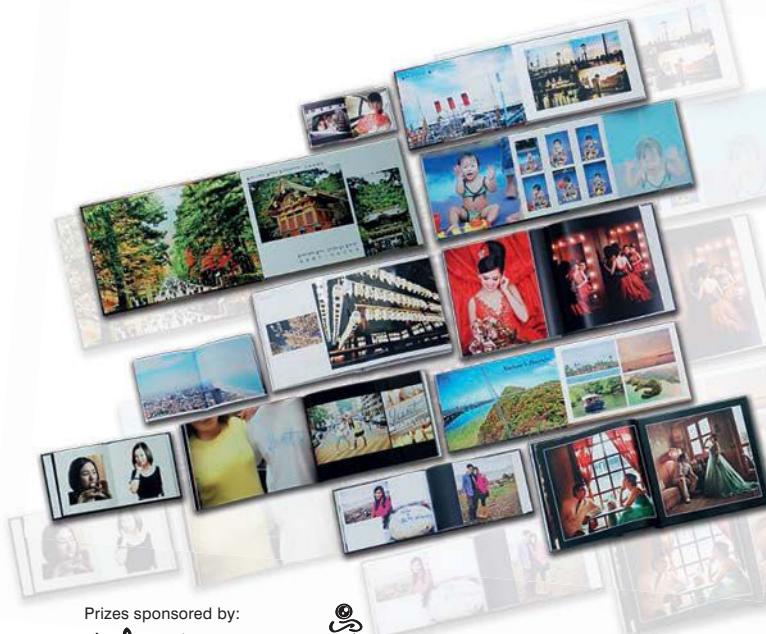
NEARBY: Enjoy a lovely private dinner with a view of the sea or study the planets from the clubhouse poolside, where astronomical telescopes are set up for stargazing moments. Definitely a memorable experience to complement a resort vacation.

PRICE: From US\$880 per night LP



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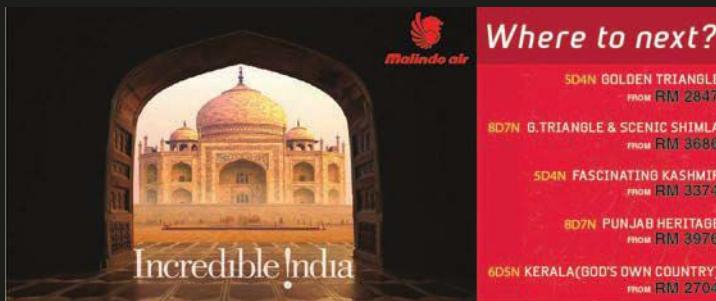
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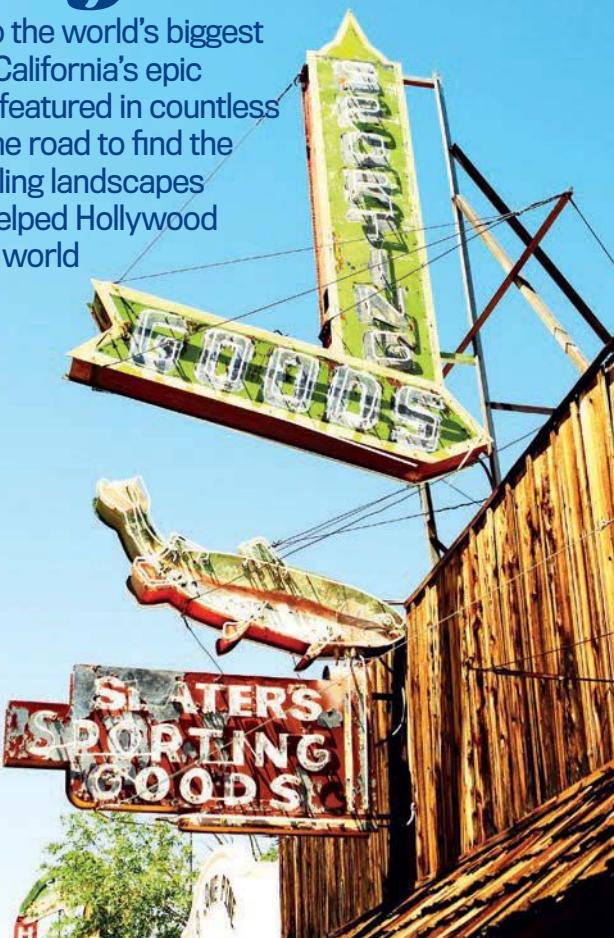
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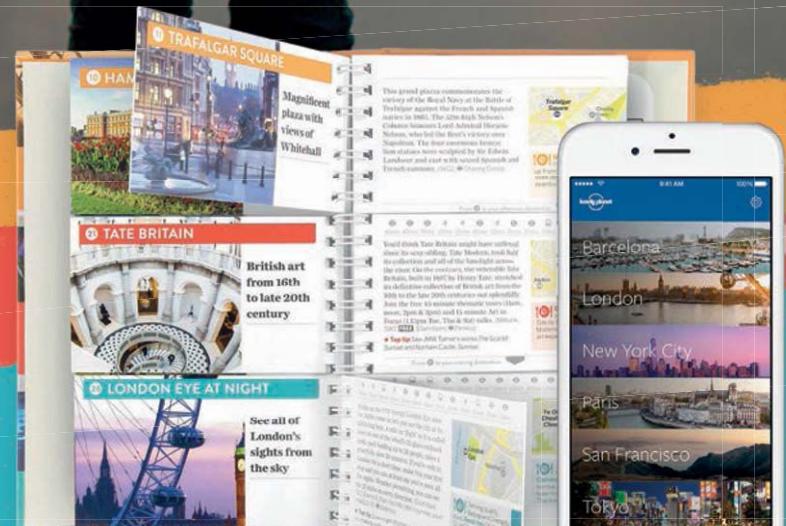
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The Glória Funicular that links the districts of Baixa and Bairro Alto

MINI GUIDE Jul/Aug 2015

lonely planet
MAGAZINE

Nightlife in Lisbon

Cherry liqueur at a street-side bar, a cocktail with grand views or a night at a classic fado club – this Portuguese city is home to some of Europe's most engaging nightlife.

Fold 2

Best clubs

★ LUX FRÁGIL 1

Lisbon's must-visit club in Santa Apolónia is part-owned by John Malkovich. Special but not snooty, it hosts big-name DJs spinning electro and house. Grab a spot on the terrace to see the sun rise over the Tejo. The dress policy is relaxed but you'll find the club soon fills up on weekends (luxfragil.com); Avenida Infante Dom Henrique; 10pm–6am Tue–Sat, entry from US\$15.20).



New Wave musician Twin Shadow performs at Musicbox

★ LOUNGE 2

For many years the riverside neighbourhood of Cais do Sodré was the haunt of whisky-slugging sailors, but now it's party central and Lounge, a laid-back indie club, is an exceptionally popular joint. It has a moody, intimate, dimly lit setting, and guest DJs, live acoustic acts and rock gigs are generally first rate (loungelisboa.com.pt; Rua da Moeda 1; 10pm–4am Tue–Sun).

★ MUSICBOX 3

Under the brick arches on Rua Nova do Carvalho in Cais do Sodré lies one of Lisbon's hottest clubs – a cross between a performing stage and a dance floor. Musicbox hosts loud and sweaty club nights with tunes shifting from electro to rock, plus gigs by established and up-and-coming bands (musicboxlisboa.com; Rua Nova do Carvalho 24; 11pm–6am Mon–Sat; entry from US\$7.60).

Best bars

★ WINE BAR DO CASTELO 4

Sample the country's finest at Lisbon's best wine bar, which serves more than 150 Portuguese wines by the glass. Located near the entrance to the Castelo São Jorge, the laid-back bar also serves gourmet smoked meats, cheeses and olives (winebardocastelo.blogspot.co.uk; Rua Bartolomeu de Gusmão 13; 2pm–10pm daily; glass of wine from US\$6.10).

★ A GINJINHA 5

Come dusk, the Rossio area buzzes with locals getting their cherry-liqueur fix in a cluster of ginjinha bars. This microscopic bar is famous as the birthplace of the sugary-sweet tipple: watch the owner line them up at the bar under the beady eyes of the drink's 19th-century inventor, the Galician friar Francisco Espinheira. Order yours 'com' – with the alcohol-soaked cherries (Largo de São Domingos 8; 9am–10pm; glass of ginjinha US\$1.70).



An original poster in the doorway of cherry-liqueur bar A Ginjinha

★ NOOBAI CAFÉ 6

Great views, winning cocktails and a festive crowd make Noobai a popular draw for a sundowner. Though it's next to the popular Miradouro de Santa Catarina, few people realise the bar is here until they descend the steps and the terrace unfurls before them. The vibe is relaxed, the music is funky jazz and the views over the Tejo are wonderful (noobaicafe.com; Miradouro de Santa Catarina; 12pm–10pm Tue–Thu, until 12am Fri–Sat, until 8pm Sun; wine with tapas US\$15.20).

Best for fado

★ A BAÎUCA 7

On a good night, walking into A Baïuca is like gate-crashing a family party. It's a special place with fado vadio (vagabond fado), where locals take a turn and spectators hiss if anyone dares to chat during the singing. The food stops around 10pm but the fado goes on until midnight. Be sure to reserve a table ahead (Rua de São Miguel 20; dinner Thu–Mon; minimum spend US\$30.40).



Fado – which dates back to the 1820s – performed at A Baïuca

★ CLUBE DE FADO 8

Clube de Fado in the heart of Alfama hosts the cream of the fado crop in vaulted, dimly lit surrounds. Big-name fadistas performing here include Joana Amendoeira and Miguel Capucho, alongside celebrated guitarists such as José Fontes Rocha. The food is ordinary, but come for drinks and appetizers (clube-defado.com; Rua de São João da Praça 86–94; 8pm–late daily; US\$15.20 cover charge).

★ MESA DE FRADES 9

A magical place to hear fado, tiny Mesa de Frades used to be a chapel. It's decorated with exquisite azulejos (glazed painted tiles) and has just a handful of tables. The show begins around 11pm and the proximity of the artists to the patrons makes this an intense, intimate venue (mesadefradeslisboa.com; Rua dos Remédios 139; 8pm–2.30am Mon–Sat; admission from US\$18.25).

TURN OVER FOR MAP AND NUMBER LOCATIONS

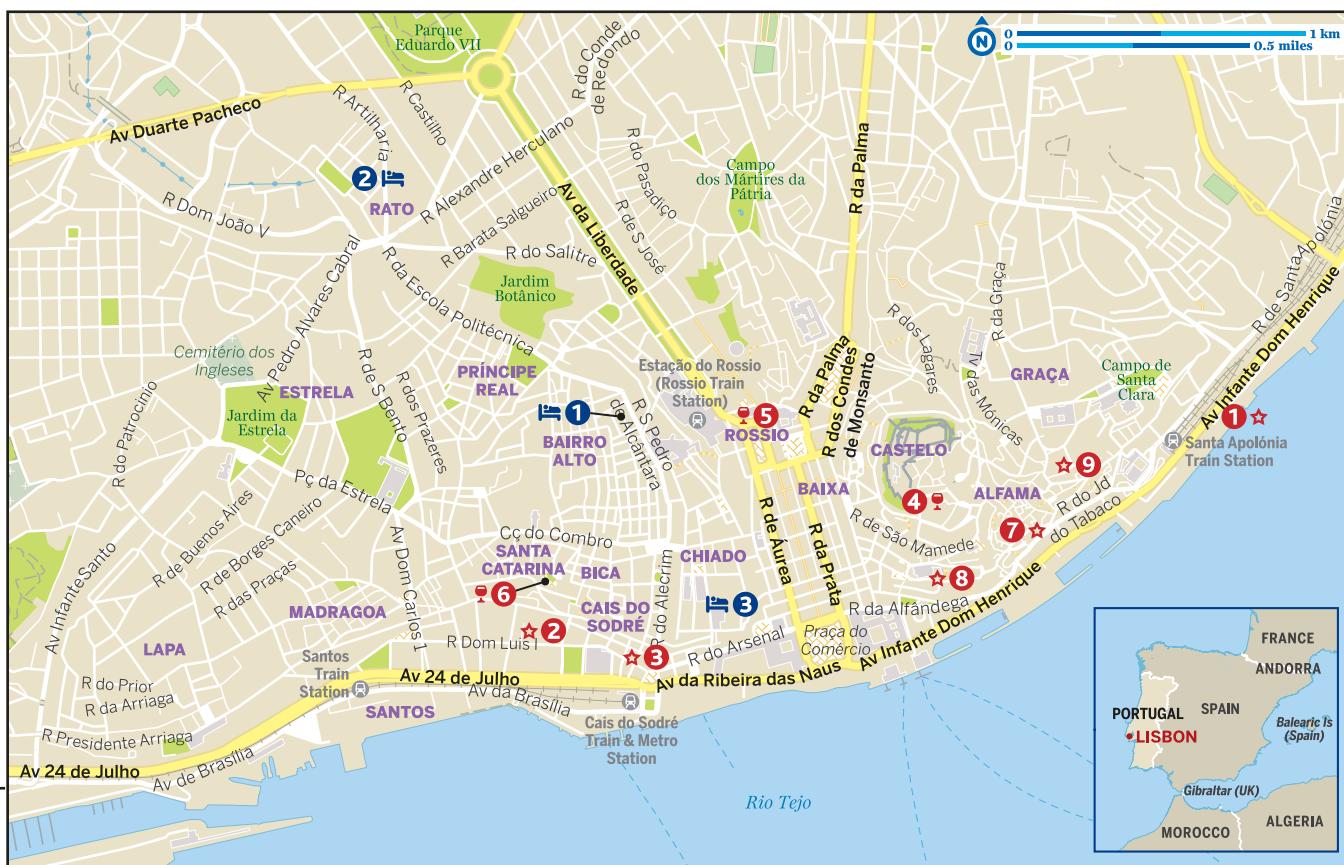
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Fold 1

MINI GUIDE

Nightlife in Lisbon

Drinking Eating Where to stay



Lisbon essentials

TRANSPORT

Numerous airlines including Turkish Airlines, Swiss Air and Lufthansa fly from Singapore to Lisbon with one layover (from US\$1180.25; online.turkishairlines.com). From Kuala Lumpur, you can fly Emirates or KLM with one stop (from US\$1315; emirates.com). Lisbon's airport is just a few miles north of the city: get there by metro, on the AeroBus or pay about US\$15.35 for a taxi. The metro is useful for short hops (single US\$1.50; metrolisboa.pt), and don't leave the city without riding tram 28 from Largo Martim Moniz or tram 12 from Praça da Figueira through the narrow streets of the Alfama. The Lisboa card is useful for visiting tourist sites and unlimited travel (visitlisboa.com US\$38.40 for 48 hrs).

WHERE TO STAY

1 Tucked down a quiet street in Bairro Alto, Pensão Globo offers 16 tidy, individually decorated rooms – from scarlet ones with mini courtyards to lime-green abodes (blueangelhotel.com; Rua do



Portuguese heroes adorn the sitting room wall of Casa Amora

Teixeira 37; from US\$45.60, no breakfast).

2 The Casa Amora has 10 beautifully designed rooms, including private studios with small kitchens. Rooms are bright, elegantly furnished and each pays homage to a different artist (casaamora.com; Rua João Penha 13; from US\$113.95).

3 The 17th-century Chiado 16 is a boutique hotel with river or panoramic views. Rooms have a classic feel, high-end furnishings and luxury marble bathrooms (chiado16.com; Largo da Academia Nacional das Belas Artes 16-17 from US\$197.50).

The know-how

WHERE TO DRINK

Bairro Alto The city's lively, often raucous centre, filled with late-night bars and shops.

Bica Head a few blocks south of Bairro Alto for a more artistically minded crowd.

Príncipe Real Just north of Bairro Alto, this is the centre of Lisbon's gay scene and home to some quirky drinking dens.

Alfama and Graça Perfect for relaxed drinks and restaurants hosting guitar-led fado (below).

Cais do Sodré Boho bars, live-music venues and burlesque clubs are perfect for a late-night bar crawl.

DOCA DE ALCÂNTARA AND DOCA DE SANTO AMARO

This dockside duo harbours wall-to-wall bars with a pre-clubbing vibe.

PARQUE DAS NAÇÕES

Waterfront restaurants, cafés and bars with outdoor seating.

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Pocket Lisbon* (US\$13.99) is ideal for short breaks, while *Portugal* (US\$24.99) has a full Lisbon & Around chapter, which is available to download at lonelyplanet.com (US\$4.95). For up-to-date event listings see visitlisboa.com.



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Stortorget, the oldest square in the city, in Gamla Stan

MINI GUIDE Jul/Aug 2015

lonely planet
MAGAZINE

Stockholm on a budget

The Swedish capital's museums are excellent value and the city can be explored on foot, bike or by water at little cost. Fill up at food carts to have enough left for a beer or two.

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Sights

NOBELMUSEET ④

The Nobel Museum presents the history of the Nobel Prizes and their recipients. It's a slick space with fascinating short films on the theme of creativity, gifts donated by prize recipients, and testimony from the likes of Martin Luther King and Ernest Hemingway. Join a guided tour for no extra charge (nobelmuseum.se; Stortorget; closed Mon Sep–May; US\$13.70, free admission 5pm–8pm Tue).

RIKSDAGSHUSET ⑤

Situated on the little island of Helgeandsholmen, the Swedish Parliament building is an unexpected pleasure to visit. It consists of two parts: the older front section (facing downstream) dates from the turn of the 20th century, but the more modern part contains the current debating chamber. Free tours offer a compelling glimpse into the Swedish system of consensus-building government (riksdagen.se; Riksgatan; see website for English tour times; free).



The Riksdagshuset building on the banks of the River Norrström

SKOGSKYRKOGÅRDEN CEMETERY ⑥

One of the city's more unusual attractions, Skogskyrkogården is an arrestingly beautiful cemetery set in pine woodland. Designed by the great Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz, it's on the World Heritage list and known for its functionalist buildings. Famous residents include screen goddess Greta Garbo. A visitor guide in English is available on the website (skogskyrkogarden.se; main entrance on Sockenvägen; open daily; free).

Fold 2

Eating and drinking

CHOKLADKOPPEN ①

Arguably Stockholm's best-loved café, Chokladkoppen sits slap bang on the enchanting main square of Gamla Stan (the old town). It's a gay-friendly spot, with a look-at-me summer terrace and moreish dishes such as broccoli and blue-cheese pie, and delicious cakes (chokladkoppen.se; Stortorget 18; 9am–11pm daily summer, 10am–10pm or longer in winter; cakes from US\$6.10).



Chokladkoppen is the perfect place to rest weary feet

NYSTEKT STRÖMMING ②

The best place to get a quick snack of fried herring is a humble cart in the plaza outside Slussen tunnelbana station. Large or small combo plates come with big slabs of the fish and a selection of sides and condiments, from mashed potato and red onion to salads and herring bread. There are also more portable wraps and a fab herring burger (Södermalmstorg; generally open 10am–8pm; dishes from US\$5.30).

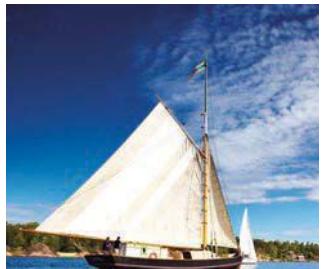
SNOTTY SOUND BAR ③

A friendly, mellow hang-out in Södermalm, the bohemian island in the south part of town, Snotty's is one of the most comfortable places to drink in Stockholm and is free of attitude. It has a vaguely retro vibe, a smooth wooden bar and record covers all over the walls. Main courses, from meatballs to chilli, are around US\$21.30 (facebook.com/SnottySoundBar; Skånegatan 90; 4pm–1am; beers from US\$7.60).

Worth a trip Activities

CYCLING ⑦

Stockholm is a very bike-friendly city with a network of paved paths leading through peaceful forested areas and wide-open fields, such as Ladugårdsgärdet to the east of the city centre. Tourist offices carry maps of cycle routes and bikes can be hired for up to three hours at a time from Stockholm City Bikes, which has about 100 stands (citybikes.se; 6am–10pm Apr–Oct; three-day card US\$22.80).



A traditional flat-bottomed boat in the Stockholm archipelago

SWIMMING ⑧

Free swimming is permitted just about anywhere you can scramble your way to the water. Popular spots include the rocks around Riddarfjärden and the leafy island of Långholmen. Smedsuddsbadet is a family-friendly beach, while Rålambshovsparken on Kungsholmen attracts swimmers and sunbathers. If budget allows, head to the Art Nouveau Centralbadet (centralbadet.se; Drottninggatan 88; US\$30.40, US\$44.10 Sat).

SAILING ⑨

On a warm sunny day, the water that surrounds and permeates Stockholm is the place to be. The city canals are mostly gentle and easily navigable, even for novices, and options include anything from pedal boats and canoes to yachts. Sjöcafé, on the banks of the park-like island of Djurgården, rents equipment from April to September (sjocafeet.se; 9am–9pm; one hour's kayak hire from US\$18.25).

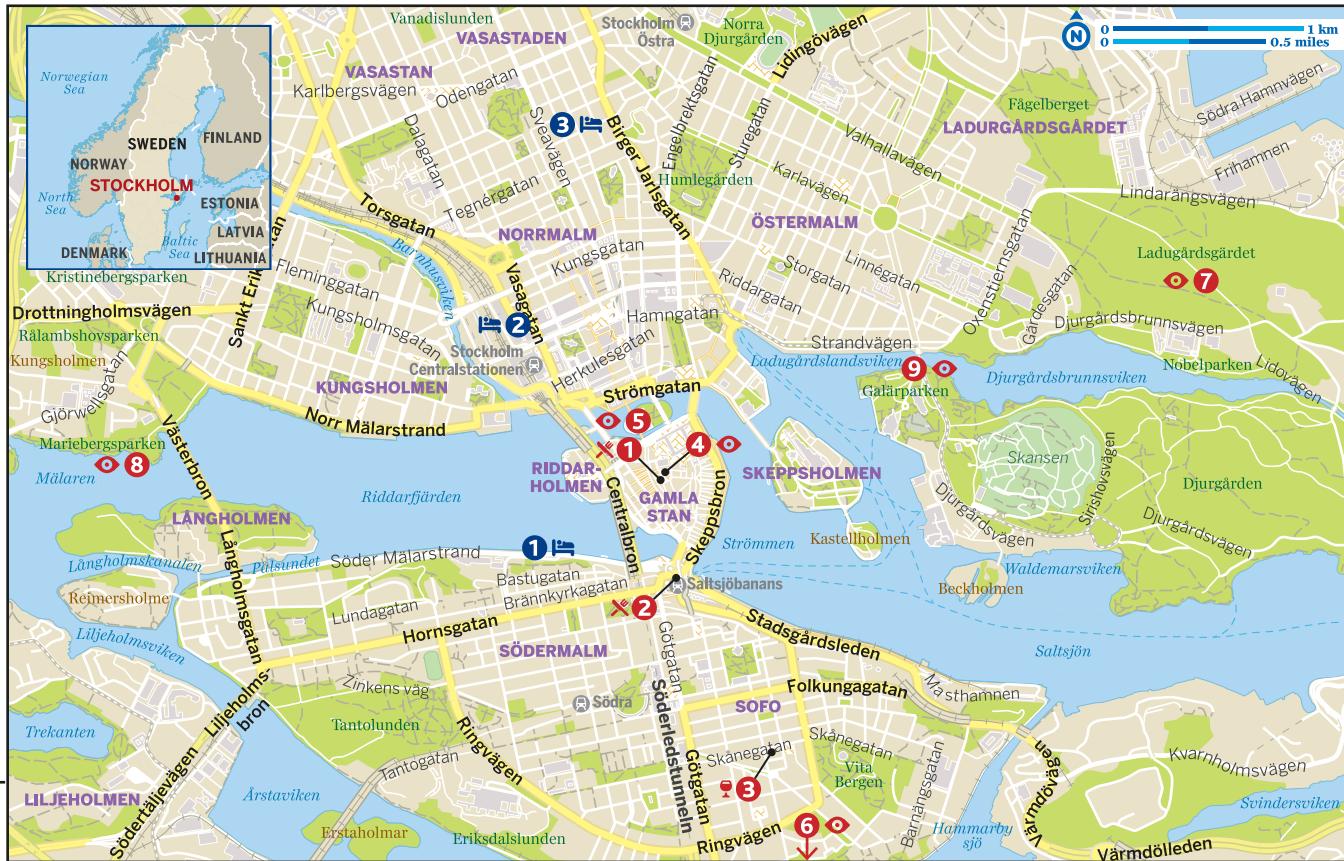
TURN OVER FOR MAP AND NUMBER LOCATIONS

Fold 1

MINI GUIDE

Stockholm on a budget

Drinking  Sights & Activities  Eating  Where to stay 



Stockholm essentials

TRANSPORT

You can fly to Arlanda airport, 23 miles north of Stockholm, from Singapore on Emirates or Qantas Airways (from US\$927.50; emirates.com), or from Kuala Lumpur on Emirates or Turkish Airlines (US\$950.55; emirates.com), all with a layover in Dubai. From Arlanda, the Arlanda Express train reaches the city centre in 20 minutes (US\$38; arlandaexpress.com). The Flygbuss takes about 40 minutes (US\$15.20; flygbussarna.se). Stockholm is easily walkable and well served by public transport: a one-day travelcard costs US\$15.95 (sl.se).



Nordic Sea Hotel's rooms are decorated with scenes of the city

right, the Nordic Sea Hotel has smallish but sleek rooms. The breakfast buffet is huge, one of the two bars is the famous Icebar, and the Arlanda Express is just steps from the lobby (nordicseahotel.se; Vasaplan 4; from US\$152.05).

③ Hotel Hellsten is owned by anthropologist Per Hellsten, and rooms range from rustic Swedish to Indian exotica. Hotel extras include a sauna and a small fitness room, as well as live jazz on Thursday evenings (hellsten.se; Luntmakargatan 68; from US\$182.50).

WHERE TO STAY

① The 1950s M/S Rygerfjord serves, along with two other ships, as a floating hostel and hotel. The look is old-school maritime, with dark wood décor and antique leather chairs (rygerfjord.se; Södermälarstrand; en suite from US\$121.65).
 ② A fantastic deal if you time it

The know-how



PENNY-PINCHING PACKAGES

Getting your money's worth out of a visit to Stockholm can be easier with a package:

- The Stockholm Card is widely available and gives entry to more than 80 museums and attractions, free travel on public transport, free sightseeing by boat and other discounts. It's available for one, two, three or five days, but while the one-day pass would require athletic levels of sightseeing energy to make it worthwhile, you can get maximum value from the two- or three-day pass by planning ahead (two-day pass US\$91.25; visitstockholm.com).

- The Stockholm Package includes a hotel room and the Stockholm Card. Some 40 hotels are involved with the scheme (from US\$76.05 per person; destination-stockholm.com).

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's Sweden (US\$24.99) has a chapter on Stockholm, which is also available to download at lonelyplanet.com (US\$4.95). For event listings and pop-culture news visit [Swedish-language dn.se](http://swedish-language.dn.se) (translate through Google).

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The Venetian port of Hania, Crete's second largest city

MINI GUIDE Jul/Aug 2015

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MAGAZINE

Culture in Crete

The birthplace of Europe's first advanced society, the Minoans, this Greek island has ample ancient treasures to explore alongside unique customs and historic traditions.

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Museums

HERAKLION ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM ④

This outstanding museum is one of the largest and most important in Greece. There are artefacts spanning 5,500 years from Neolithic to Roman times, but it's most famous for its extensive Minoan collection. A visit greatly enhances an understanding and appreciation of Crete's culture (odysseus.culture.gr; see website for seasonal opening hours; US\$5.35).



Ancient statues at the Heraklion Archaeological Museum

NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS MUSEUM ⑤

Myrtia, nine miles south of Iraklio, is the ancestral village of Crete's most famous writer and home to the excellent Nikos Kazantzakis Museum. It focuses on the author's life: watch a short documentary, then nose around personal effects, movie posters, letters and photos, as well as overviews of the author's most famous works, including Zorba the Greek (kazantzakis-museum.gr; see website for seasonal opening hours; US\$3.80).

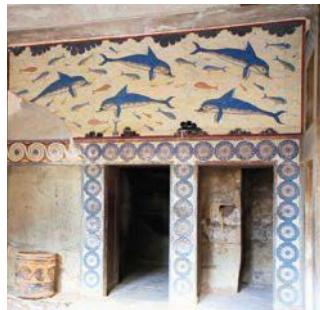
LYCHNOSTATIS MUSEUM ⑥

With a seaside setting near Malia, this family-run open-air folklore museum recreates a traditional Cretan village with commendable authenticity. Buildings include a windmill and a farmer's house. Elsewhere, there are weaving workshops, ceramics and plant-dying demos, orchards and herb gardens, and a theatre that hosts music and dance performances. Guided tours and audio guides are available (lychnostatis.gr; 9am–2pm Sun–Fri; US\$6.10).

Archaeological sites

PALACE OF KNOSSOS ①

The ruins of the Minoan capital of Knossos were unearthed in 1900 by Sir Arthur Evans who excavated sections of the palace. This is one of the most important archaeological sites in the Med and it's worth joining a guided tour to appreciate the wealth of frescoes, sculptures and jewellery on show (odysseus.culture.gr; 8am–8pm Jun–Sep, until 5pm Oct–May; entry US\$7.60).



Dolphin Fresco in the Queen's Megaron at the Palace of Knossos

GORTYNA ②

The former Roman capital of Crete is the largest archaeological site on the island and one of the most fascinating. As many as 100,000 people lived here and the city sprawls over a square kilometre. Although most people visit the ticketed fenced area, the most important temples, baths and theatres can be seen for free to the south (odysseus.culture.gr; 8.30am–8pm Jul–Aug, shorter hours rest of year; entry US\$5.35).

LATO ③

The ancient city of Lato is one of Crete's few non-Minoan ancient sites. It was founded in the 7th century BC by the Dorians and was one of the most powerful cities in Crete until it was abandoned in 200 BC. The ruins sprawl over the slopes of two acropolises in a lovely mountain setting, commanding views of the bay of Mirabello (odysseus.culture.gr; 8.30am–8pm, shorter hours in winter; US\$2.30).

Music and arts

PALEOHORA ⑦

There is a vaguely '70s feel to Paleohora, originally 'discovered by hippies' and now a laid-back town where you can enjoy live violin- and bouzouki-driven Cretan music in its natural setting. On summer evenings the main street and pebble beach road are closed to traffic, and the main-street tavernas pitch up on the pavement and live music is performed into the night.



A violinist at the Houdetsi Festival, now in its fifth year

IRAKLIO SUMMER FESTIVAL ⑧

Iraklio celebrates summer with two months of top-notch dance, music, theatre and cinema performances held primarily in enchanting outdoor venues such as the Nikos Kazantzakis Open-Air Theatre and the Manos Hatzidakis Open-Air Theatre from July to mid-September. Box office sales normally begin just one week in advance (heraklion.gr; tickets from US\$6.10).

HOUDETSI FESTIVAL ⑨

Some 14 miles south of Iraklio is the little village of Houdetsi, which hosts a four-day celebration of music, dance, food and art from 7–10 August. The event is the brainchild of renowned musician Ross Daly, an Irishman who's a leading exponent of the Cretan lyre and founder of Labyrinth, a musical instrument museum and highly reputable musical workshop (houdetsifestival.com; free).

TURN OVER FOR MAP AND NUMBER LOCATIONS

MINI GUIDE

Culture in Crete

★ Entertainment ◎ Sights & Activities 🏨 Where to stay



Crete essentials

1 TRANSPORT

Fly to Heraklion International Airport, the primary airport in Crete, from Singapore or Kuala Lumpur on Air Berlin or Etihad Airways, with two layovers (from US\$1391.85 or US\$1,316.75; airberlin.com). Or travel on Lufthansa from Kuala Lumpur with two stops in between (US\$1,124.35; lufthansa.com). Hiring a car is a good way to get around this huge island (week's hire from US\$361.40; europcar.com). Buses run across the island and go to major attractions such as Knossos (singles from US\$1.50; bus-service-crete-ktel.com).



A terrace at Casa Leone overlooking the Aegean Sea

Venetian residence in Hania's old town that's been converted into a romantic, family-run boutique hotel. The rooms are spacious, with balconies overlooking the harbour (casa-leone.com; from US\$144.35).

② **WHERE TO STAY**
One of Crete's ecotourism trailblazers is the isolated mountain settlement of Milia. Sixteen stone farmhouses have been transformed into cottages with rustic furnishings. It's worth a visit just to eat in the superb taverna (milia.gr; from US\$113.95).
② Casa Leone is a 15th-century

The know-how

SIR ARTHUR EVANS: THE EXCAVATOR OF KNOSSOS

- British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans was curator of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum from 1884–1908.
- He believed the Mycenaean civilization derived from Crete and, over 35 years, unearthed a Bronze Age Minoan palace, as well as remains of a Neolithic civilization beneath.
- The archaeological world was stunned that a civilization of this sophistication had existed in Europe at the same time as the pharaohs of Egypt.
- Evans' reconstructions continue to be controversial – many archaeologists feel he sacrificed accuracy to his overly vivid imagination.

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's Crete (US\$19.99) is a comprehensive guide to the island and chapters from the book can be downloaded at lonelyplanet.com (US\$4.95). Take a virtual step-by-step video tour of Knossos at bsa.ac.uk/knossos.



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Madrid's Gran Vía, also known as the street that never sleeps

MINI GUIDE Jul/Aug 2015

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Architecture in Madrid

From the heart of the old city to the showpiece architecture, Madrid can rival Paris, Rome and Barcelona for the breadth of its monuments. Start your tour in Paseo del Prado, a beautiful boulevard lined with museums and gardens.

Fold 2

Plaza Mayor & Royal Madrid

PLAZA MAYOR 1

The monumental heart of the city, the Plaza Mayor was completed in 1619 by Juan Gómez de la Mora. It's built in typical Herrerian style, of which the slate spires are the most obvious expression. Ochre-hued apartments with wrought-iron balconies and 17th-century frescoes overlook the plaza, which has borne witness to bullfights and executions during the Spanish Inquisition.



Tiepolo's elaborate fresco in the throne room at the Palacio Real

PALACIO REAL 2

The Royal Palace, finished in 1764, is an Italianate Baroque landmark. Around 50 of its 2,800 rooms are open to the public – it's popular, so try to visit at 10am before the tour buses arrive. From the northern end of the Plaza de la Armería, the main stairway leads to the royal apartments and the Salón del Trono (throne room) – a lavish space with a ceiling painted by the Venetian Baroque master, Tiepolo (patrimonionacional.es; Calle Bailén; US\$12.90).

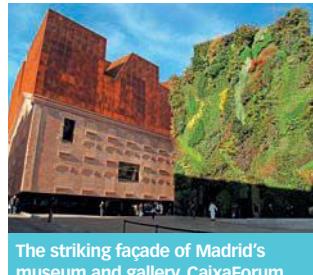
PLAZA DE LA VILLA 3

The Plaza de la Villa is enclosed on three sides by fine examples of 17th-century barroco madrileño (Madrid's Baroque architecture: an amalgam of brick, exposed stone and wrought iron). On the western side of the square is the 17th-century former town hall, in Habsburg-style Baroque. On the opposite side is the Gothic Casa de los Lujanes, while the Baroque Casa de Cisneros, built in 1537, with later Renaissance alterations, also catches the eye.

Best bars

PARQUE DEL BUEN RETIRO 4

Laid out in the 17th century by Felipe IV, the gardens of El Retiro were opened to the public in 1868 and are now a favourite haunt of madrileños. Just south of the lake is the Palacio de Cristal, a beautiful steel and glass pavilion, and in the northeast of the park is Ermita de San Isidro, one of the few examples of Romanesque architecture in Madrid (Puerta de Alcalá; free).



The striking façade of Madrid's museum and gallery, CaixaForum

(fundacio.lacaixa.es; Paseo del Prado, 36; free).

CAIXAFORUM 5

This extraordinary structure near the southern end of the Paseo del Prado is one of Madrid's most eye-catching and certainly one of its most unusual architectural innovations. This brick edifice is topped by a summit of rusted iron. On an adjacent wall is the jardín colgante (hanging garden), a lush vertical wall of greenery. Inside there are four floors of exhibition and performance space awash in stainless steel and with soaring ceilings.

PLAZA DE CIBELES 6

Of all the grand roundabouts on the Paseo del Prado, Plaza de Cibeles most evokes the splendour of imperial Madrid. The jewel in the crown of this stirring celebration of Belle Époque is the Palacio de Cibeles (1917) – built by Antonio Palacios, Madrid's most prolific architect of the era – which serves as Madrid's City Hall. The fountain of Cibeles, named after Cybele, the Greek goddess of fertility, lies at the centre of the plaza and is one of Madrid's most beautiful statues.

Worth a trip

SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL 7

Several villages were razed to make way for this formidable palace-monastery complex, conceived by King Felipe II in the 16th century as a royal palace and mausoleum. It's a one-hour train trip from Madrid to San Lorenzo de El Escorial, now a prim town complete with quaint shops and restaurants (patrimonionacional.es; closed Mon; US\$12.90).



The four-storey Plaza de Toros Monumental de Las Ventas

PLAZA DE TOROS MONUMENTAL DE LAS VENTAS 8

Las Ventas was opened in 1931 and is the heart and soul of Spain's bullfighting tradition. One of the largest rings in the world, it has a neo-mudéjar (a Moorish architectural style) exterior and a huge arena able to seat 23,000 spectators. Tours take you out onto the sand and into the royal box (lasventastour.com/en; Calle de Alcalá, 237; tours US\$12.90).

CHAMBERÍ 9

With its signature plaza, old-style shops and unmistakeable barrio feel, Chamberí is one of Madrid's most authentic neighbourhoods. Wander the tree-lined avenues, admire the mix of architecture – from neo-Gothic to modern – and visit the Estación de Chamberí: abandoned in 1966, this Metro station has reopened as a museum that recreates the era of the station's inauguration in 1919 (esmadrid.com/en; free).

TURN OVER FOR MAP AND NUMBER LOCATIONS

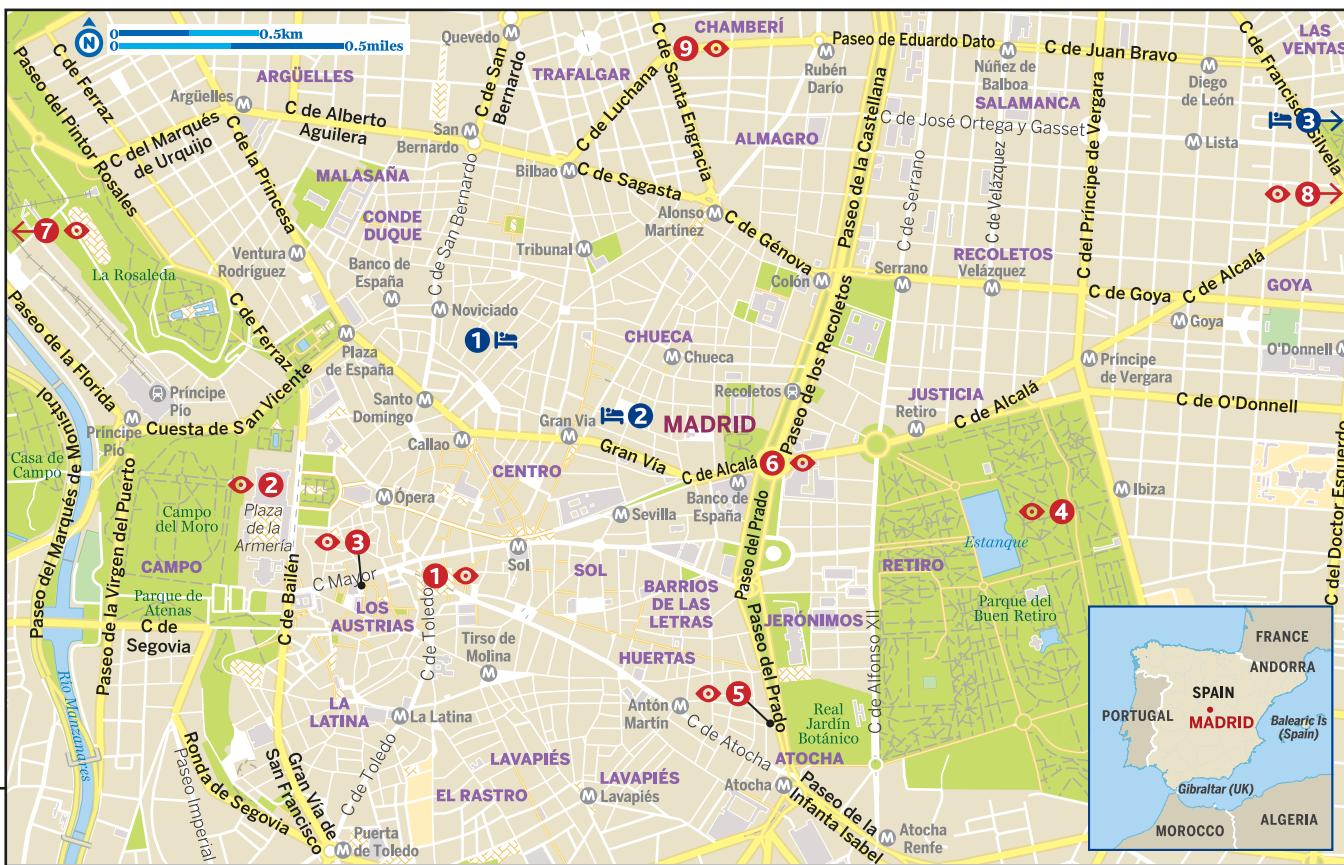
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Fold 1

MINI GUIDE

Architecture in Madrid

Where to stay Sights & Activities



Madrid essentials

TRANSPORT

Travel on Qatar Airways or Turkish Airlines from Singapore to Madrid Barajas Airport with one layover (from US\$977.38; qatarairways.com). While Lufthansa and British Airways fly from Kuala Lumpur with one stop (from US\$744.15; lufthansa.com). The airport is eight miles northeast of the city – you can travel by Metro (US\$6.50; 25 mins), Airport Express bus (US\$6.50; 40 minutes; emtmadrid.es) or taxi (US\$32.30–US\$46.10; around 30 minutes).

Moving around the city is simple and the Metro system is all you are likely to need – there are 12 colour-coded lines and single tickets cost from US\$2 (metromadrid.es).

WHERE TO STAY

1 Antigua Posada del Pez inhabits the shell of a historic Malasaña building, but the rooms are contemporary, decked out simply and in muted tones. The hotel is just a few steps up the hill from Calle del Pez, one of Malasaña's most happening streets. It's a good



Contemporary minimalism at the innovative Hotel Silken

deal, especially when you book ahead (antiguaposadadelpez.com; Calle Pizarro, 16; from US\$83.60).

2 The '70s façade of Room Mate Óscar is a striking local landmark. Rooms are awash in bright colours and some have floor-to-ceiling murals. There's also a good tapas bar and a rooftop terrace (oscar.roommatehotels.com; Plaza Vázquez de Mella, 12; from US\$129.15).

3 Each floor of the luxury Hotel Silken was designed by an architect – including Jean Nouvel, Ron Arad, David Chipperfield, Sir Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid – resulting in an intriguing pastiche of styles (hoteles-silken.com; Avenida de América, 41; US\$197.50).

The know-how

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The city's collection of art is housed in some fine buildings...

Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

The building that is home to Picasso's Guernica is adapted from the shell of an 18th-century hospital, with eye-catching exterior glass lifts (museoreinasofia.es).

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza

The renovated 19th-century Villahermosa Palace and the adjoining modern extension house one of the top private collections of European art in the world (museothyssen.org).

Museo Nacional del Prado

You might visit the Prado for Goya and Velázquez, but the building itself is a masterpiece designed by Juan de Villanueva, an 18th-century architect who left his mark across the capital (museodelprado.es).

TOP TIP

If you're planning to visit the 'big three' (the museums mentioned in 'The know-how'), the Paseo del Arte covers them all in a combined ticket for US\$28.15. It's valid for one visit to each gallery in a 12-month period. Buy it at any of the three ticket offices.

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's Pocket Madrid (US\$13.99) is a valuable guide to the city, while Madrid City Guide (US\$22.99) is a more extensive book, with chapters available to download at lonelyplanet.com (US\$4.95). For what's going on in the city, visit esmadrid.com. Pedro Almodóvar is one of the city's most famous sons – *Todo Sobre Mi Madre* (All About My Mother) starred Madrid-born Penélope Cruz and won him an Oscar for Best Foreign Film.



Kayaking down Vancouver Harbour towards the Burrard Street bridges

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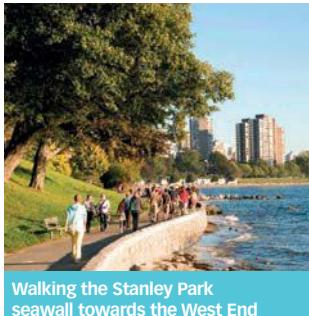
Summer in Vancouver

Studded with sandy beaches, forest trails, kayak routes and the mighty Stanley Park, plus food trucks and alfresco dining, this Canadian city is an ideal summer destination.

Activities

WALKING ④

Built between 1917 and 1980, the 5½-mile Stanley Park seawall trail is a popular outdoor hangout. Encircling the park, it offers mountain-fringed vistas on one side and dense forest canopy on the other. You can walk the whole thing in two to three hours, or explore the 15 miles of trails that crisscross the park, including Siwash Rock Trail and Beaver Lake Trail (vancouver.ca).



Walking the Stanley Park seawall towards the West End

HIKING ⑤

North Vancouver's Grouse Grind, a steep, sweat-triggering slog up the side of Grouse Mountain, is nicknamed Mother Nature's StairMaster. Around two miles in total, this forest trek takes about one hour to conquer. At the top, hikers are rewarded with free access to the resort's facilities (including lumberjack shows and a grizzly-bear and wolf refuge) and must pay for the Skyride gondola back down (grousemountain.com; 8:45am–10pm daily; Skyride one way US\$8.35).

KAYAKING ⑥

A sunset kayak around the coastline is a signature outdoor activity that many locals enjoy. Headquartered on Granville Island, the friendly folk at Ecomarine Paddlesport Centres offer guided kayak tours as well as kayak and stand-up paddle board rentals. The 2½-hour sunset tour departs from Jericho Beach or English Bay beach, with the sun fading behind mountains as you paddle (ecomarine.com; 1668 Duranleau St; sunset tour, Wed, Fri & Sat, Jun–Sep, US\$53.20).

Relaxing

QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK ①

The city's highest point has views of mountain-framed downtown and houses specimens of every tree native to Canada. It also contains sports fields, formal gardens and fountains at the park summit (home to the Bloedel Conservatory), where you'll also find a hulking Henry Moore bronze (vancouverparks.ca; cnr W 33rd Ave & Cambie St; free).



Macaws at Queen Elizabeth Park's Bloedel Conservatory

KITSILANO BEACH ②

Facing English Bay, 'Kits' Beach is one of Vancouver's favourite summertime hangouts. The wide, sandy expanse attracts Frisbee and volleyball players, and those who just like to hang out and catch the rays. The ocean is fine for a dip, though serious swimmers should consider plunging into heated Kitsilano Pool, one of the world's largest outdoor saltwater pools (vancouver.ca; pool entry US\$5.30).

GRANVILLE ISLAND PUBLIC MARKET ③

From pyramids of glistening fresh fruit to deli counters that inspire picnicking, this is one of North America's finest markets. It's the perfect spot to while away an afternoon: snack on your smoked sausages and hot honey-dipped doughnuts with a coffee in the sun among the buskers at the shoreline plaza (granvilleisland.com; Johnston St; 9am–7pm daily).

Eating and drinking

STEAMWORKS BREWING COMPANY ⑦

The historic, brick-paved Gastown is home to Vancouver's best watering holes, including the landmark Steamworks Brewing Company, whose signature beer is the refreshing Lions Gate Lager. There are outdoor tables for summer drinkers and great views across the water from inside (steamworks.com; 375 Water St; 11.30am–late; pints from US\$4.55).



The Juice Truck – one of the city's many independent food trucks

GALLEY PATIO & GRILL ⑧

A terrific spot at sunset to plop down in one of the patio chairs and eyeball the sailboats steering toward shore as the pyrotechnic sky unfolds. There are usually a couple of local wine offerings, along with beers from R&B Brewing (the Sun God Wheat Ale is recommended in summer). Beach-side dishes include fish and chips, seafood chowder and burgers (thegalley.ca; 1300 Discovery St; mains from US\$7.60).

FOOD TRUCKS ⑨

Vancouver arguably has the best street-food scene in Canada, offering anything from Korean sliders and salmon tacos to Thai green curry and barbecued brisket sandwiches. Food Cart Fest takes place every Sunday throughout the summer: 20-odd carts converge alongside community markets to a backdrop of live music and DJs (foodcartfest.com; 12pm–5pm Sun, Jun–Sep; 215 West 1st Ave).

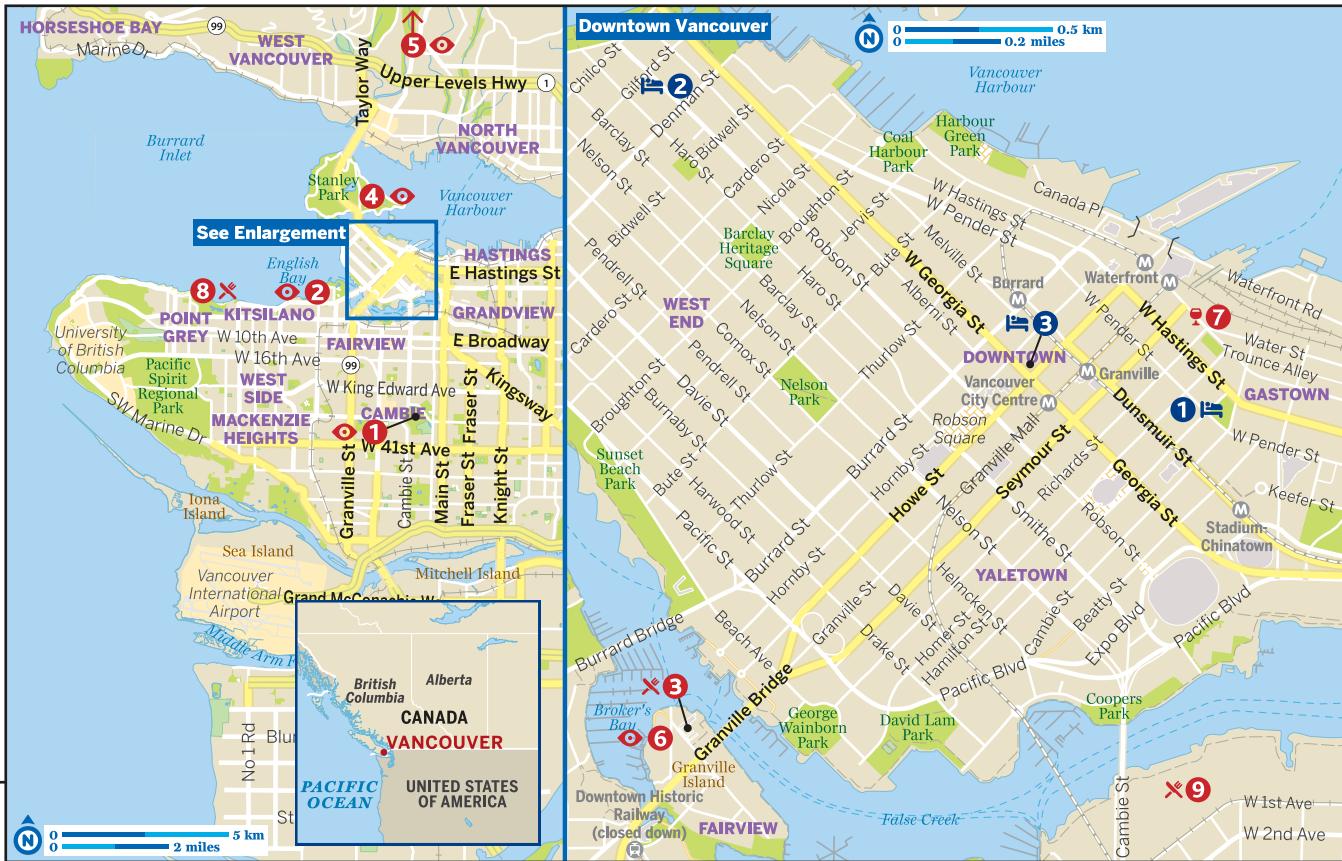
TURN OVER FOR MAP AND NUMBER LOCATIONS

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MINI GUIDE

Summer in Vancouver

Drinking  Sights & Activities  Eating 



Vancouver essentials

1 TRANSPORT

Travel to Vancouver International Airport from Singapore on China Eastern Airlines or Delta with one layover in Shanghai or Seattle (from US\$823.90; en.ceair.com) or from Kuala Lumpur on China Southern Airlines (from US\$1,273; csair.com/en). Canada Line trains to downtown take around 25 minutes and cost from US\$6.85; alternatively taxis cost around US\$30.40. Downtown Vancouver is easy to get around on foot, while buses and SkyTrain light rail are useful for hopping to other neighbourhoods, and mini ferries ply the waters around False Creek. A one-zone ticket, valid on SkyTrain, bus and Seabus boats costs US\$2.30 (translink.ca).

2 WHERE TO STAY

1 The popular Victorian Hotel has an excellent location close to the downtown action. Rooms have high ceilings, glossy hardwood floors, a sprinkling of antiques and plenty of historical



The lobby of the Victorian Hotel, built during a gold rush in 1898

charm (victorianhotel.ca; 514 Homer St; from US\$).

2 Times Square Suites Hotel in West End is the ideal apartment-style sleep-over, with spacious one-bedroom suites with full kitchens. Be sure to visit the rooftop BBQ (timesquaresuites.com; 1821 Robson St; from US\$129.25, breakfast not available).

3 Rosewood Hotel Georgia has had a spectacular renovation to bring the 1927 landmark back to its heyday. Modern art adorns the public areas, while the rooms have a classic style with earthy tones (rosewoodhotels.com; 801 West Georgia St; from US\$410.60).

The know-how

STANLEY PARK TOUR

- From the Georgia St entrance, trace the seawall around to Brockton Point's bright totem poles (below).
- Continue along the seawall, past a lighthouse, before reaching Lumberman's Arch.
- Follow the path to the miniature railway, then follow Pipeline Rd to the Tudor-esque pavilion. In front is the alfresco Malkin Bowl theatre.



FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's Vancouver (US\$21.99) is a comprehensive guide, and individual chapters from the book can be downloaded at lonelyplanet.com (US\$4.95). Miss 604 is the city's No 1 blogger and lists events in the city (miss604.com).

- Continue south to the freshwater Lost Lagoon. Follow the shoreline to Lost Lagoon Nature House to learn about the local flora and fauna.
- Continue to the lagoon's western tip, then head to the ocean front. Follow the seawall to Third Beach and settle down for a sunset panorama; (destinationstockholm.com).

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Eating in Las Vegas

From the Vegas staples – the steakhouse and the buffet – to celebrity chefs showing off in over-the-top dining rooms, Sin City offers a wealth of restaurants to suit every budget.

Tear out page here then fold along the dotted lines

Fold 2

Best old-school dining

✖ GOLDEN STEER ①

This fabulously retro steakhouse is signposted with a namesake golden bovine out front. The Rat Pack, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis all dined here: come to soak up vintage Vegas vibes and dine on the likes of Alaskan king crab cocktail and 24oz Diamond Jim cut rib of beef (goldensteersteak houselasvegas.com; 308 W Sahara Ave; 4.30pm–11pm; steak from US\$36.50, other mains from US\$25.85).



The Wicked Spoon food hall in the Cosmopolitan resort

✖ WICKED SPOON ②

Buffets are a Vegas classic. The Wicked Spoon spread has the expected stations for meat, sushi, seafood and desserts, but there's more of a global focus; small portions of fresh dishes (such as steak carved to order) are served on mini containers that you grab to take back to your table (cosmopolitan lasvegas.com; Cosmopolitan, 2708 Las Vegas Blvd S; brunch and dinner daily; from US\$24.35).

✖ ENVY ③

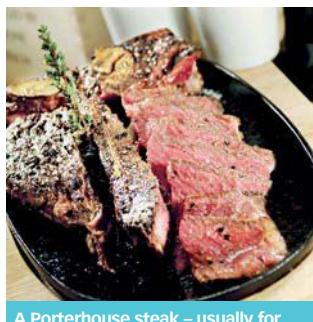
A dramatic entrance leads inside this great steakhouse, with its plush high-backed chairs and theatrical curtains. The steaks and seafood get top marks, and sides such as truffle-parmesan fries and bourbon creamed corn receive the gourmet treatment (renaissancelasvegas.com; 3400 Paradise Rd; 6.30am–2pm & 5pm–10pm, Sun brunch 6.30am–noon; steaks from US\$31.90, other mains from US\$25.85).

Fold 1

Best celeb kitchens

✖ PICASSO ④

Master chef Julian Serrano delivers artistic Franco-Iberian fusion in a museum-like setting. Original masterpieces by Picasso battle for attention over the indulgent, yet miniature-sized dishes, such as the sautéed fallow deer medallions and seafood boudin (bellagio.com; Bellagio, 3600 Las Vegas Blvd S; 5.30pm–9.30pm, closed Tue; four-course set menu US\$106.35).



A Porterhouse steak – usually for two – at Wolfgang Puck's CUT

✖ JOËL ROBUCHON ⑤

The only restaurant in the city with three Michelin stars is done up in leather and velvet, giving it the feel of 1930s Paris. Complex, French-accented seasonal tasting menus promise the meal of a lifetime. Signature dishes include truffled langoustine ravioli and saddle of lamb with cumin aubergine compote (mgmgrand.com; MGM Grand, 3799 Las Vegas Blvd S; 5.30pm–10.30pm Fri–Sat, until 10pm Sun–Thu; two-course menu US\$106.35, four-course menu US\$174.75).

✖ CUT ⑥

Austrian-born Wolfgang Puck was the first celebrity chef to revitalise Vegas's dining scene when he imported his Spago restaurant in the early 1990s. Now he's upped the ante again with CUT, a modern steakhouse that dares to infuse Indian spices into Kobe beef, and accompanies Nebraska corn-fed steaks with Argentine chimichurri sauce or Point Reyes blue cheese (wolfgangpuck.com; The Palazzo, 3325 Las Vegas Blvd S; 5.30pm–11pm daily; steaks from US\$30.40).

Best tables with a view

✖ ALIZÉ ⑦

André Rochat's Michelin-starred restaurant is one of North America's highest. Enjoyed by nearly every table, the panoramic floor-to-ceiling views of the glittering Strip are even more stunning than the haute French cuisine (alizelv.com; 56th fl, Palms Casino Resort, 4321 W Flamingo Rd; 5.30–10pm Sun–Thu, until 10.30pm Fri–Sat; mains from US\$45.60).



Eiffel Tower Restaurant diners watch the Bellagio fountain show

✖ EIFFEL TOWER RESTAURANT ⑧

At the upscale eatery atop Vegas's Eiffel Tower, the Francophile wine list is vast, the chocolate soufflé is unforgettable, and views of the Strip and the Bellagio's fountains are breathtaking. This place is most romantic at sunset, but lunch is a more economical option (eiffeltowerrestaurant.com; 3655 Las Vegas Blvd S; lunch and dinner daily; lunch mains from US\$16.75, dinner mains from US\$30.40).

✖ TOP OF THE WORLD ⑨

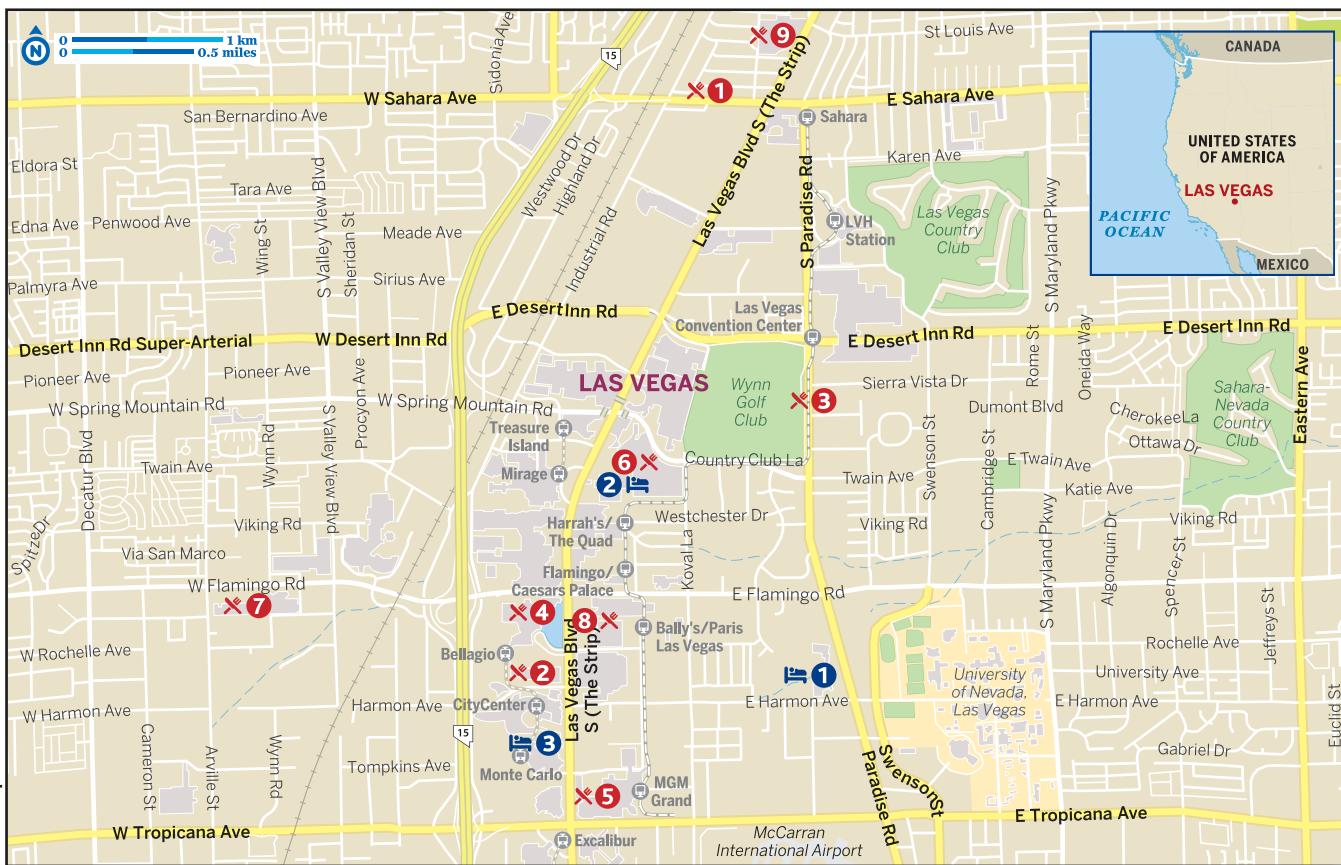
While taking in the cloud-level views at this revolving roost atop the Stratosphere Tower, patrons dressed to the nines enjoy impeccable service and satisfying, if overpriced, dishes such as wild king salmon or chateaubriand for two (topoftheworldlv.com; 106 fl, Stratosphere Tower, 2000 Las Vegas Blvd S; lunch and dinner daily; lunch mains from US\$22.80, dinner mains from US\$36.50).

TURN OVER FOR MAP AND NUMBER LOCATIONS

MINI GUIDE

Eating in Las Vegas

 Eating  Where to stay



Las Vegas essentials

1 TRANSPORT

Take Delta Airlines or Singapore Airlines from Singapore to Las Vegas with two stopovers (from US\$1417.70; delta.com). Or fly British Airways or Etihad Airways from Kuala Lumpur with two stops in between (from US\$1798.50; britishairways.com). The easiest and cheapest way to get to your hotel is by airport shuttle (from around US\$9.20 to Strip hotels; companies include supershuttle.com). The Strip is more than four miles long, so the best way to get around is to combine walking (the Strip has movable walkways and elevated crosswalks) with monorail (one-day pass US\$10.75), bus rides (from US\$6.15) and sometimes a taxi (around US\$18.45 along the Strip).



Gondolas drift past 'St Mark's Square' at the Venetian hotel

and plasma TVs (hardrockhotel.com; 4455 Paradise Rd; from US\$83.60).

2 Fronted by graceful canals and pedestrian plazas, the standard suites at the Venetian and Palazzo are among the Strip's largest, with oversized Italian marble baths and sunken living rooms (venetian.com; 3355 Las Vegas Blvd S; from US\$197.50).

3 With its staggering views and opulent design, the Mandarin Oriental is often cited by business travellers as the best hotel in Vegas. The spa echoes the opulence of 1930s Shanghai (mandarinoriental.com; 3752 Las Vegas Blvd S; from US\$303.90).

WHERE TO STAY

1 Everything about the boutique Hard Rock Hotel & Casino spells stardom. French doors reveal skyline and palm-tree views, and brightly coloured minimalist rooms feature souped-up stereos

The know-how

WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

Lucky streak on the downswing? Seek solace in late-night comfort food:

- 24-hour omelettes at the Peppermill (from US\$10.60)
- Famous shrimp cocktail at Golden Gate (US\$3.05)
- Old-fashioned cheeseburgers (US\$6.10) and shakes (US\$3.05) at vintage diner Tiffany's Café
- Steak and eggs at Mr Lucky's, at the Hard Rock Hotel (US\$16.75)
- The cheap downtown buffet at Main Street Station (breakfast US\$6.10, lunch US\$7.60, dinner from US\$9.90)
- Locals rate the happy hour antipasti at Ferraro's (from US\$3.80; 4pm–7pm)
- Half off food (and drinks) on Tuesdays until 1am, plus 5pm–7pm on other days at Paymon's Mediterranean Café.



FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Discover Las Vegas* (US\$21.99) is a handy guide, while the Las Vegas and Nevada chapter from *Southwest USA* can be downloaded at lonelyplanet.com (US\$4.95). Read up on restaurants in the Las Vegas Review-Journal (lvrj.com).

COMPILED BY NATHALIE MILLMAN, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM AMY C BALFOUR, MICHAEL BENANAV, SARAH CHANDLER, LISA DUNFORD AND CAROLYN MCCARTHY. PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAN COPSON/AVL IMAGES, THOMAS HART SHELBY, JOHN ORMOND, KUMAR SRISKANDAN/ALAMY, JAI DAGNALL/ALAMY, BONCHAN/SHUTTERSTOCK



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hotel offers international resort facilities including private beach club, pool lagoon, spa, sauna, massage, fitness centre, kids club, meeting room and conference rooms. Novotel Bali Nusa Dua Hotel & Residences is the only comprehensive residences complex

in the area, a perfect place to spend a vacation with family and friends or to hold a meeting in a peaceful and conducive atmosphere.

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TO THE WORLD**



Hong Kong International Airport is a multi-modal transport centre, offering extensive land and sea connections to major cities in the Pearl River Delta region (PRD). While cross-boundary ferries provide speedy sea transport to and from 8 ports, coach service covers 110 Mainland cities and towns. Passengers looking for point-to-point transport can hire a limousine to enjoy more privacy and comfort; and get connected to about 180 destinations across the world through over 1,100 daily flights.

For more information regarding flight locations and connections with PRD,
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